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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 168**

SEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Monday 26 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (NO. 2) BILL
(By Order)
Read a Second time and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Nuclear Levy

1. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the earliest year in which the nuclear levy could be abolished; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I announced on 12 February that the initial non-fossil fuel obligation would be set for the period 1990-91 to 1997-98. The fossil fuel levy will be required for at least the same period, although I expect the rate to decline significantly over that time.

Mr. Barnes: How does the Secretary of State hope to reduce the subsidy, let alone abolish it? How will greater efficiency be introduced into the nuclear energy industry, which is secretive, bureaucratic, technically complex and highly dangerous? Will it be done by reducing safety standards?

Mr. Wakeham: First, it will not be achieved by a reduction in safety standards. Secondly, whatever may have been the practice in the past, the arrangements that we are bringing into force will be much more open, allowing for greater public scrutiny. Nuclear electricity is vital to ensure security of supply. As nuclear power still costs more than fossil power, the levy is needed so that the extra costs can be identified and fairly shared out.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that critics of the nuclear levy should bear it in mind that in the past, perhaps for very good reasons, coal has been subsidised? If subsidies were beneficial to that industry, is not a subsidy for the nuclear industry appropriate now?

Mr. Wakeham: I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend. The nuclear industry is required, properly, to pay the costs of disposing of its own waste, so it is not quite on a level playing field with other energy producers. It is important to make a proper comparison.

Mr. Dobson: How does it benefit electricity consumers for the right hon. Gentleman to insist that nuclear power stations—the most expensive in the system—must run continually?

Mr. Wakeham: Anyone who knows about the electricity industry, as the hon. Gentleman does, will appreciate that nuclear power stations, being base load capacity, are more economic if run full time. The major part of the cost of a nuclear reactor is its capital cost rather than its running costs.

Mr. Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he included the nuclear levy in the price increases that he announced recently? With distribution and transmission costs varying across the country, will boards need to impose a range of electricity price increases in the future?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, I can confirm that, as I announced recently in the House the average price increases for all customers will be below the rate of inflation and will

include customers' contributions to the nuclear levy. My hon. Friend is right that there will be a variation in the prices levied by area boards, but that is a matter for them. Prices will vary from area to area, as they have in the past. Some boards have greater costs because their customers are few and far between and a large cable network is expensive. Other boards have a traditionally low rate of return and have further to catch up.

As I said, the precise figure to be charged is a matter for each board, but domestic electricity price increases, which I believe particularly interest my hon. Friend, will range from 8 to 9 per cent. with perhaps two or three boards increasing their charges by a higher percentage. However, I expect that, overall, increases will range from 3 to 8 per cent., with the avarage being less than 6 per cent.

4. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the fossil fuel or nuclear levy in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Wakeham: The rate of the levy will depend on the terms of the nuclear contracts. Those will ensure that the nuclear levy follows a declining profile. I therefore expect the rate of levy to decline significantly over the next eight years.

Mr. Barron: In relation to contracts, is it true that the nominee directors of Nuclear Electric have been advised not to start trading as a plc until they have some guarantee from the Treasury about the costs of reprocessing and decommissioning?

Mr. Wakeham: That is not a correct statement of affairs. Any director of any company has to satisfy himself that the company conforms with all the requirements of the Companies Acts before it starts trading, and the nominee directors of Nuclear Electric are no exception. They will want to see that Nuclear Electric is set up on a proper basis, as I do. All will be revealed in due course.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in calculating those levies we must compare the cost of generation by nuclear power with the cost of coal or other fossil fuels? Nuclear power generation involves long-term costs, but we shall know the cost of coal generation only at the end of the three-year contracts with British Coal. When my right hon. Friend makes that comparison, will he take into account the cost of flue gas desulphurisation, during the next three years at least, and the possible cost of cheap coal from overseas, which is low in sulphur?

Mr. Wakeham: The question of which fuel the generators use to generate electricity and, in practice, which mix of fuels will be a matter for them at the end of the period. Obviously, there will be competition between British coal, gas and oil and imported coal. The Government are committed to the implementation of the European directive on desulphurisation, and they will ensure that the fossil fuel generators, when they are floated, will be able to meet their obligations under the directive.

Mersey Barrage

6. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish a decision on whether the Mersey barrage will be constructed.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): The Mersey Barrage Company's application for the non-fossil fuel obligation is under consideration by my Department.

Mr. Alton: I thank the Minister for his personal commitment to the project. Does he intend to include the barrage scheme in the non-fossil fuel obligation? When is a decision likely to be reached? Will he confirm that of all the candidates for barrage schemes, his Department's findings show that the best location would be the River Mersey?

Mr. Morrison: To answer the hon. Gentleman's first point, he and the whole House will be pleased to hear that, under the non-fossil fuel obligation, about 300 applications have been handed by the distribution companies to my Department. A considerable amount of work remains to be done to discover which fit the criteria. The hon. Gentleman knows, because he came to see me in the Department, that I should like progress to be made on the Mersey barrage scheme. As for the difficulties of the scheme——

Mr. Skinner: Mañana man.

Mr. Morrison: I am delighted that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is interested in the Mersey barrage. The difficulties are commercial and environmental, and they will have to be considered carefully.

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend confirm that £1 million worth of clear, renewable electricity could be generated each week by the scheme? Would not it be a most valuable and important precursor to a Severn barrage?

Mr. Morrison: I cannot confirm the precise amount to my hon. Friend, but it is certainly considerable. I am sure that, if it went ahead, the Mersey barrage would be a precursor to the Severn barrage.

Oil Platform Fabrication

7. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will assess the potential for expanding the size of the United Kingdom fabrication capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Consideration of the potential for expansion of capacity in the fabrication industry is a matter for the private sector, and will depend on the commercial judgment of individual yard owners.

Mr. Kennedy: I thank the Minister for that opaque answer. There has been some discussion, at least in Scotland—as the Minister will know—about the number of fabrication yards and whether there is any possibility of expanding them. I am thinking in particular of the former Kishorn site in Wester Ross which went into receivership; there has been talk about its future.

Will the Minister bear it in mind that the private sector is, rightly, still concerned about the European Community draft directive on procurement, and about the knock-on effect that it could have on the oil-related sector in Scotland? Can he give us any idea of the Department's thinking on either subject?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman will remember, it was only two years ago that he and other hon. Members who represent yards in the north and north-east of

Scotland were coming to me and asking—understandably—where the work would come from. Now we are in a different position, with different challenges. It may be opaque to the hon. Gentleman, but it will be the market place that decides.

As for the directive, as I have said several times it is important that we continue to play on a level field, and we shall do all that we can to ensure that.

Energy Conservation

8. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent initiatives he has taken to encourage energy conservation in the home.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Energy Efficiency Office continues to promote energy efficiency in the home through a number of programmes.

Mr. Tredinnick: Many of my constituents, especially the residents of Hinckley, will welcome the new scheme for insulation in low-income homes. Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking to support the proposals when they come before the Standing Committee considering the Social Security Bill, and has he any proposals for advertising to encourage people to be more energy conservation-minded in the home?

Mr. Morrison: Clause 10 of the Social Security Bill, which is being piloted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, is part of the grand design of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I shall give it every support that I can. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) knows, last week I issued a consultation paper; we are waiting to hear any ideas that he and no doubt many others may have.

We have a small advertising campaign—aimed principally at industry and commerce—during the next few weeks, with the aim of targeting the people to whom my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. Dalyell: As vice-chairman of the Conservative party, does the Minister believe that his Energy Efficiency Office is any more efficient than the Prime Minister's Office, whose costs have risen by 20·6 per cent?——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is well wide of the question. If the hon. Gentleman will relate his remarks to the question on the Order Paper, I am sure that he will receive an answer.

Mr. Gow: Would not the Government set a much better example to those who should be saving energy in their homes if they were better at saving electricity costs by economising on lighting and heating? Is my right hon. Friend aware that, all over the country in public sector buildings lights are on at noon on bright days and that they are also far too hot? Will he do something about it?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend may not be aware that I chair a committee, at which a Minister from each Department is represented, whose aim is to achieve precisely those objectives. If he visited my Department, my hon. Friend would see energy-efficient lamp bulbs that use only one fifth of the electricity normally used by lights. I am sure that he would like other Departments to be shown that example.

Mr. Skinner: As Chairman of the energy conservation committee which oversees all those Departments, will the Minister take a look at the figures relating to central heating in the Houses of Parliament? Every year that I have been a Member of Parliament, the organisations concerned have spent a small fortune every recess trying to get it right, and they have not succeeded yet. I should like to know how much the bills amount to: my guess is that the figure is well over £20 million.

When he has done that, will the Minister go to No. 10 Downing street and, in his capacity as chairman of that committee, find out why the Prime Minister has spent 20·6 per cent. extra on central heating? Is it because of Bernard Ingham and all the others who are stuck up in the attic?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman, who is one of the most prominent Members of the House will no doubt realise better than I that the House of Commons (Services) Committee will look into that matter. It is not a matter for a Government Department. Perhaps an approach by the hon. Gentleman and myself to the Committee—although an unholy alliance—might work. I shall consider every aspect of the cost of energy as far as it is within the province of this Department of state.

Mr. Mans: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that according to well-informed opinion, PowerGen, National Power and the other generating companies could spend their money better if they subsidised home insulation instead of building more power stations?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend will realise that the electricity and gas industries are required, after privatisation, to provide energy efficiency advice. They were not required to give that advice when they were nationalised.

Electricity Boards

9. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the area electricity boards; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet area board chairmen regularly to discuss various matters.

Mr. McKay: When the Secretary of State next meets the area board chairmen will he ask them whether they agree with John Bailey of National Power that domestic consumers should get through 1990-91 without an increase in domestic electricity rates? Or is it the case, in a newly privatised industry, of "Excused boots" during the fight against inflation?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know the Mr. Bailey to whom the hon. Gentleman referred.

I have already stated my views about prices. I believe that domestic and commercial consumers will get a good deal out of privatisation. It will compare well with the price rises that were imposed under the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supported.

Mr. Dickens: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the electricity boards, will he impress on them that the greatest wish in the nation is for security of supply to keep the lights burning at home and the factories working? Will he also impress upon them that we must go

for all options, whether they be coal, oil, gas or nuclear? All those options must be open to us if we are to keep the lights burning and the factories working.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. Under the terms of the privatised electricity industry, there will be a legal obligation on area boards to offer terms to any customer. Under their licence conditions, they must have the capacity to meet any likely requirement. There will be substantial penalties if they do not meet those requirements.

Mr. Hardy: I share the concern that people should be reasonably warm and that the wheels of industry should turn, but does the Secretary of State accept that the price of electricity should command more attention and priority than it seems to? In addition, when he meets the chairmen of the area boards, will he advise them that although the licence under which they will operate after privatisation may allow them to run funeral parlours and second-hand car showrooms, and other activities in the service sector which may be even less attractive, their overwhelming concern must be the maintenance of an electricity supply?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no doubt that the area chairmen require no lectures from me, or even from the hon. Gentleman, about their responsibilities. The area boards will be public limited companies of substantial local significance. They will be big employers in their areas and will have big responsibilities. In my opinion, they will be very well run and will be very good members of the community that they serve.

Mr. Sumberg: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairmen of the boards, will he outline to them some of the plans for allowing employees in the industry to buy shares after privatisation, particularly in the north-west of England? When the water industry was privatised, over 90 per cent. of the employees took shares in it. My right hon. Friend can expect a willing and eager response from the people who live in my constituency. They want to involve themselves in this newly privatised industry.

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely. We very much hope that a large number of the employees in the privatised companies will take advantage of the opportunity to have shares in their companies. The necessary arrangements will be announced in due course.

Mr. Morgan: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairmen of the area boards, will he ask them whether they agree with John Baker, the chief executive-designate of National Power, that, in economic terms, there is no need for an increase in domestic electricity prices from 1 April? For the third year running, the Government are imposing an increase in domestic electricity prices at least twice what was requested by the industry. Are the Government jacking up electricity prices as a form of taxation, to use the price of fuel to encourage conservation —one might call it an insulated roof tax—or do they simply wish to increase the rate of return, which is not high enough for the Government's friends in the City?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. The price of electricity must be determined at a price which is accepted and enables the industry to earn a reasonable rate of return.

Mr. Barron: Answer the question.

Mr. Wakeham: I will answer the hon. Gentleman. The rate of return that a privatised industry will earn will be slightly less than the 5 per cent. return on assets that would have been required under Labour party policy had the industry remained in the state sector. The deduction that any reasonable person could make is that the price of privatised electricity will be lower than it would have been under a Labour Government.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the history of privatised power shows that investment is greater and prices are lower than they would have been had the industry stayed in the public sector?

Mr. Wakeham: The record is there for all to see. The electricity industry will be run more efficiently and I hope that investment will be better directed than it sometimes has been in the past.

National Grid

11. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the National Grid Company; and what matters he expects to discuss.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Tony Baldry): My right hon. Friend and I meet and will continue to meet the chairman-designate of the National Grid Company from time to time to discuss a range of matters relevant to the company and the electricity industry as a whole.

Mr. McFall: Does not the incident at Hinkley B power station two weeks ago demonstrate that nuclear power stations are more vulnerable than conventional power stations because when storms affect the nearby grid lines, the entire station has to be tripped out? In the light of that, how can the Minister keep asserting that nuclear power stations guarantee security of supply?

Mr. Baldry: Nothing happened at Hinkley B which was in any way untoward, and it is highly irresponsible to suggest otherwise. Nuclear electricity makes a significant contribution to diversity of power supplies in Britain and will continue to do so.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the Minister look into a matter that causes me some anxiety—the transmission of electricity across the country by high transmission lines on pylons which create an electric charge? Current research in the United States shows that when they go past housing estates they could be a hazard to people who live beneath them. I should like to think that there is no hazard, but I should be grateful if the Department would look into the matter.

Mr. Baldry: If my hon. Friend will write to me on that I shall make sure that his anxieties are thoroughly investigated.

Mr. Doran: The Minister will be aware of the increasing concern at the number of gas burn generating schemes that have recently been announced. Will he raise the matter when he next meets the chairman, and in particular will he let us know whether the Government welcome the explosion in gas burn schemes? Is it part of a planned policy and has consideration been given to the effect that it is likely to have on other forms of electricity generation?

Mr. Baldry: It is and always has been the policy of this Government—and, I think, of the Labour party when it was in government—that there should be diversity of electricity generation based on coal, gas and nuclear sources. I find it a little difficult to reconcile the hon. Gentleman's question with my meetings with the chairman of National Grid.

Energy Efficiency

13. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the rate of improvement in energy efficiency since 1979 *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other European countries.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Energy consumption in the United Kingdom is virtually unchanged since 1979, although our gross domestic product has risen by 20 per cent. The average reduction in the United Kingdom's energy intensity between 1979 and 1987 was 2·5 per cent., comparing favourably with the European average of 1·6 per cent.

Mr. Boswell: I thank my right hon. Friend for those encouraging figures, but does he accept that continuing improvements in energy efficiency are the best means, if not the only means, of reconciling the needs of economic growth and of the maintenance and protection of our environment? Will he assure the House that, if possible, our relative improvement compared with other countries will be sustained in future years?

Mr. Morrison: The simple answer is yes and yes. We believe that energy efficiency remains important, and we shall do all that we can to strive to ensure that we out-perform other countries.

Ms. Armstrong: In the light of that reply, will the Minister reconsider the regulations, under which assistance for district heating schemes can be obtained only by users of more than 25,000 therms of gas per year? Derwentside district council has made representations to the Minister on that because, having managed through energy conservation to reduce its consumption to less than 22,000 therms a year, it is losing grant aid and support for its schemes. Is that not a scandal, and does it not go against everything that the Government preach?

Mr. Morrison: No, it is not a scandal. I am prepared to look at any scheme according to the rules laid down, but it certainly is not a scandal and it does not go against the need to continue our efforts to achieve energy efficiency, as demonstrated by the 300 applications under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest spurs to energy efficiency is an increase in the cost of energy? Does he agree that it is not entirely realistic to compare our energy efficiency record with that of our continental neighbours without also comparing the average cost of electricity? Does he further agree that the greatest barrier to energy efficiency is the low cost of electricity in this country?

Mr. Morrison: I agree with my hon. Friend that international comparisons must take many factors into account, but neither he nor I would be popular with hon. Members if we advocated a policy of high energy costs.

Pipelines

14. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the number of oil and gas pipelines constructed in the United Kingdom continental shelf in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the years 1985 to 1989, the numbers of oil pipelines authorised for construction on the United Kingdom continental shelf were 28, 16, 10, 37 and 30. The corresponding figures for gas pipelines were 29, 18, 15, 24 and 30.

Dr. Moonie: I am sure that the Minister shares our concern for the future of British Steel. What action is he taking to promote its involvement in the construction of those pipelines and to increase the British contribution to them?

Mr. Morrison: I want British Steel to be as successful as the hon. Gentleman does. A significant number of pipelines have been approved in the past five years. Subject to being able to predict the future, we expect as many approvals in the next five years. That offers a significant market opportunity for British Steel which I hope that it will take.

Energy Efficiency

16. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what reports from PowerGen he has received about energy-saving proposals.

Mr. Baldry: I have received no specific reports from PowerGen about energy-saving proposals, but I am aware of its interest in the subject.

Mr. Jack: I am disappointed. Perhaps my hon. Friend has not seen recent press reports on PowerGen's suggested initiative to save energy by insulating existing properties and factories rather than building new power stations. Perhaps he will evaluate that proposition, make public his findings and also publicise the benefits of insulating existing housing rather than concentrating simply on new build.

Mr. Baldry: If PowerGen is considering energy-saving proposals, that is entirely a matter for the company to decide. I applaud the company's business acumen in investigating the potential of energy efficiency. Everyone must have an interest in using energy as efficiently as possible.

Landfill Gas Schemes

17. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what encouragement his Department has given to the development of landfill gas schemes.

21. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what encouragement his Department has given to the development of landfill gas schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department took the lead in exploring the potential of landfill gas and has spent some £2 million on research, development and demonstration projects to encourage its exploitation as a fuel.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that pouring rubbish into large excavations in the fields owned

by the London Brick Company and in other parts of the country will result in a great advantage to the environment? Is he aware that, although this source will contribute greatly to electricity production, a hazard exists and if houses are built on the sites, strict regulations, which I believe already exist, must be observed to ensure that they are protected?

Mr. Morrison: I agree with my hon. Friend about the significant advantages to be gained from landfill gas. I am delighted that about 50 of the 300 non-fossil fuel obligation applications relate to landfill gas. I agree that the correct regulations must be taken into account both when the gas is used and afterwards.

Sir George Young: Although, on the face of it, this seems an unlikely energy source, is it used overseas for useful purposes?

Mr. Morrison: In short, yes. I will provide my hon. Friend with the detail if he wishes.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that the putrefaction processes involved in the generation of gas in landfill sites lead to considerable contamination of groundwater in many sites? In conjunction with the projects that his Department runs, will he ask the Department of the Environment to consider the impact of landfill sites on the general environment?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman rightly points to the environmental aspects of landfill gas. That is why it is important to carry out a great deal of research and development. I should have hoped that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues would welcome the initiatives that have been taken, not least because such projects involve recycling and contribute greatly to tackling the greenhouse effect.

Union of Democratic Mineworkers

19. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what meetings he has had with the officers of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I have met the president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and we discussed a number of issues affecting the coal industry.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, at that meeting, the leaders of the UDM and the right hon. Gentleman discussed the possibility that if the Tories were re-elected they would introduce privatisation arrangements for British Coal and money would be laundered to the UDM not only to set up companies in advance to buy into British Coal but to use taxpayers' money in the form of actual cash or of departmental expertise? Given the press comments to that effect, is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to tell the House that no taxpayers' money has been handed over in any form to the UDM and will not be handed over in the event of privatisation?

Mr. Wakeham: I know of no taxpayers' money that has been handed over to the UDM. The hon. Gentleman is wrong if he thinks that he knows what went on at my meeting with the president of the UDM. It was a very interesting meeting and I told him about the Government's position on coal privatisation. For the hon. Gentleman's benefit, I will repeat what I said. I said that the Government were committed to privatising the coal industry in the next Parliament but had not determined the best way for that to be done. I said that I would welcome the president's suggestions of what he thought would be the best way for it to be done and I await his suggestions in due course.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend met the president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, did he discuss the fact that as British Coal is the largest power supply user in the country—the environmentally friendly mini-power station at Bilsthorpe—will be subject to the nuclear levy?

Mr. Wakeham: Negotiations about that power station are still in progress. The levy is paid by consumers of electricity and not by power stations and is based on an order that has been presented to the House.

Mr. Eadie: When the right hon. Gentleman met officials of the UDM, was he candid and frank with them? Did he tell them that if the Government continue to pursue their policies there will be a correspondingly large contraction of coal mining in the Nottinghamshire area as he has already intimated that the Government propose to give the go-ahead to the import of low-sulphur coal and as desulphurisation has a lower priority on his Department's agenda?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that that matter was raised when I spoke to the president of the UDM. Had it been raised, I should have confirmed that the Government are fully committed to the European directive, so there has been no change in that policy. I should also have mentioned that, in accordance with the policies of our predecessors, the Government do not seek to restrict the importation of coal.

I said to the president that the future place of British Coal in our economy depends on its ability to be the supplier of choice for the generating industry. I believe that an efficient British Coal will still maintain a substantial share of the generating industry's fuel requirements, and I hope that the industry will respond to the challenge before it.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Local Government Finance

64. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the community charge on the revenues from his properties in Lancashire.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The community charge will have no effect upon revenue from Duchy property in Lancashire.

Mr. Jack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Duchy residents are suffering the worst case of pillage since the Viking era in the unnecessarily high community charge that they will have to bear as a result of overspending by the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council? Does my right hon. Friend agree that their position could be helped if the county council adopted the Conservative

group's suggestion of a charge £60 less than that proposed by Labour? Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Conservative group on its initiative?

Mr. Baker: I was in Lancashire on Friday and I met many people who were angry with Lancashire county council, whose expenditure has risen by 17½ per cent.—a massive £123 million—with the result that the community charge figure will be very high. If the rating system had continued, the rates in Lancashire would have risen by 32 per cent. this year. I warmly congratulate the Conservative group on Lancashire county council on advancing proposals setting out in detail how they would reduce the community charge by £60 per person in a full year.

Dr. Cunningham: Is not the fixing of budgets for the education of our children, the care of elderly people, the provision of social services and the meeting of housing needs far too important a matter to be affected by arm-twisting, bullying and intimidation from the chairman of the Conservative party? Whatever happened to the concept of the poll tax bringing more accountability to local government? That idea seem to have gone out of the window now that Ministers and the chairman of the Tory party have been ringing up leaders of authorities to threaten them. Has the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster seen the denunciation by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy of the fictitious figures used by the Prime Minister in the House last week to manipulate public opinion? As he is talking about the effect of high poll tax figures, why does he not deal with the situation in his own county of Surrey?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Lancashire.

Dr. Cunningham: Why does not the right hon. Gentleman compare Lancashire with Surrey? Woking is 56 per cent. above the Government figure, Fareham 49 per cent., Eastleigh in Hampshire 48 per cent. and Dover in Kent 48 per cent. What is he telling his Tory constituents in Mole Valley?

Mr. Baker: I can tell the hon. Gentleman the difference between a Conservative-controlled authority and a Labour-controlled authority and I have not been ringing up the obvious Conservative councils. A Conservative authority looks for value for money and tries to find ways to reduce the community charge whereas a Labour authority looks for ways to increase expenditure. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has the brass neck to raise these questions. He is the author—the sole author, as I understand it—of the roof tax and local income tax. My constituents in Mole Valley want to know what they would pay under the Cunningham roof tax and local income tax. The hon. Gentleman announced his proposals with a great flourish of trumpets last year, but the shadow Cabinet panicked when it saw them and he was told to say nothing more about them. The Labour party will have to come clean by 3 May about its alternative to the community charge. It would be fundamentally dishonest for the Labour party to campaign without a specific alternative as electors would not know how they would be affected. If by 3 May the electors do not know how they will be affected, the Labour party will have been cynical, dishonest and hypocritical.

York

65. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy's properties in York.

Mr. Baker: I plan to visit York on 1 May, although not in my capacity as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Gregory: In anticipation of my right hon. Friend's next visit to York, will he note the buoyant state of the economy there and that it is enjoying an unprecedented decline in unemployment in line with the national trend? Will he confirm that that is in stark contrast with the years when York, like the rest of the nation, was unfortunately under a Socialist administration?

Mr. Baker: I confirm what my hon. Friend has said. In the past year unemployment in Yorkshire has fallen by a fifth and in the past three years it has fallen by half. That will be welcomed by both sides of the House. I commend to the House the comments of the chairman of the Yorkshire and Humberside CBI who in November 1989 said:

"Business in the region is in much better shape to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond than anyone would have dared forecast at the beginning of this decade."

That is a tribute to the buoyancy of the economy in Yorkshire and to the policies that we have followed in the past 11 years.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Employees (Insurance Contributions)

70. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will make a statement on his recent correspondence with the hon. Member for Bolsover on insurance contributions paid by employees.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): This is not a matter for the Public Accounts Commission strictly. I can confirm what I told the hon. Gentleman in correspondence. The Comptroller and Auditor General has significant doubts about the effectiveness of controls exercised by the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue acting on its behalf to ensure that employers have properly calculated and paid all contributions due to the national insurance fund. As a result, he has qualified his certificate for the 1988-89 national insurance fund account which is due to be published early in March. He has also told me that he intends to carry out a major study of this area, which would examine whether the Department's mechanisms for ensuring that contributions have been received from the maximum number of eligible persons operate in an economic and effective way.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the Comptroller and Auditor General that we are pleased that the investigation is going ahead? Will he also tell him to be aware that some companies say that they employ only a small number of people when in fact they have a larger number on the books?

Will the hon. Gentleman also ask the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine the multinational companies which pay extravagant salaries abroad but according to their returns to the Inland Revenue supposedly pay only

Mickey Mouse wages here? Will he tell his right hon. Friends that introducing legislation and changing the rules so often provides many loopholes? Is it not time that there were more inspectors dealing with that issue rather than hounding one-parent families?

Sir Peter Hordern: The Comptroller and Auditor General is examining the system of controls at the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue. There is no evidence from his investigations to show that there is widespread abuse. If any such evidence comes to light, the Comptroller and Auditor General will report it to the House and I have no doubt that it will be examined by the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that 99·9 per cent. of British companies collect national insurance contributions and pay them to the Treasury in the proper way? Does he further agree that unscrupulous companies should be rooted out, booted out and taken to court?

Sir Peter Hordern: I do not know what the proportion is, but I agree with the second part of my hon. Friend's question.

Meetings

71. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission when the Public Accounts Commission last met; and what subjects were discussed.

Sir Peter Hordern: As I informed the House in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 15 January, the Commission last met on 12 December 1989. Among the subjects discussed at that meeting were the estimates for the National Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Audit Office for 1990-91, and the corporate plan for the National Audit Office to 1994-95.

Mr. Allen: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one reason why the Comptroller and Auditor General is able to discover and investigate scandals such as the national insurance scandal is that he has, and must maintain, adequate levels of staff? Will he make every effort to ensure that the wage levels paid in the National Audit Office are at least comparable with, if not better than, those paid in the private sector so that the multi-million and possibly billion-pound scandals that have come to light will continue to be revealed to the House?

Sir Peter Hordern: Recruitment to the National Audit Office is proceeding well and the Comptroller and Auditor General is quite satisfied with that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that when the Commission last met it had before it the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the House of Commons Refreshment Department? That report highlights the fact that the Refreshment Department has almost £2 million in reserve, yet it pays some of the lowest wages in the country to those employed in the Dining Rooms of the House. Is that not a matter——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not sure that that is a matter for the Public Accounts Commission.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is a Commission report. Why cannot I ask my question without interruption?

Mr. Speaker: These questions relate to the Public Accounts Commission, not the House of Commons Commission.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is a Commission report.

Sir Peter Hordern: I read the National Audit Office annual report with great care, but I can remember nothing about the kitchen committee's report in it. No doubt it is a matter that the hon. Gentleman will wish to raise with his right hon. Friends.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

EC Directives

72. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council over the last 12 months how many European Economic Commission directives emanating form the Commission were considered by the House before and after 10 o'clock; and how many were not considered by the House at all.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): All the legislative proposals issued by the European Commission are considered by the Select Committee on European Legislation, which decides whether to recommend them for debate. Including non-legislative documents, 751 EEC documents were deposited in Parliament in 1989. A total of 96 documents were debated—32 before 10 pm, 40 after 10 pm, and 24 in Standing Committee.

Mr. Taylor: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is a major democratic problem when floods of legislation affecting all our constituencies pour out of Brussels but in many cases are not fully discussed by the House of Commons? Should not further action be taken to ensure that legislation affecting our constituents is properly discussed in the House before decisions are made in Brussels? Does my right hon. and learned Friend further agree that the worst solution of all would be to refer that flood of legislation to tame Committees?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend must understand that delegated legislation, national or international, has long been a feature of parliamentary government, particularly unitary parliamentary government such as our own.

On Community legislation, the number of documents coming forward for approval or consideration by the House has not varied significantly in the past 10 years. The proportion debated depends upon the proportion recommended for further consideration by the Scrutiny Committee. That proportion has varied between 10 and 15 per cent., and the figure last year was in no way exceptional. I believe that all those recommended for consideration were debated.

The Procedure Committee report that we are studying makes it clear that debates on such matters are normally held in time. We shall, of course, give further consideration to its recommendations.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Leader of the House agree that the significance of many of the documents, particularly many of the 90 that we discussed last year, is becoming much greater? Does he therefore agree in principle with the recommendation of the Procedure Committee that it

would be better for the Select Committee on European Legislation to be able to put those important documents in a wider context? Does he agree with analogy that the EC Scrutiny Committee already has binoculars at its eyes but is asking the House to give it radar?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Of course the Government attach importance to continuing proper scrutiny of legislation of this kind. That is why we are studying closely the recommendations of the Procedure Committee report, which found that the scrutiny machinery of this Parliament was at least as effective as that of any other member state. It is right that we should give detailed consideration to the Committee's report with a view to early implementation of any changes that the House agrees are necessary.

Mr. Rowe: As we get closer to the EC, which is entirely desirable in most respects, would not it ensure that a higher political priority were given to such important scrutiny if the power to initiate legislation came from Ministers rather than from the European Commission? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that would be a much better way to run the EC?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will understand that the process whereby legislation takes shape depends on the relationship between the Commission and the Council of Ministers. The Commission often takes on board proposals from various member states or Ministers. Those proposals, wherever they originate, are carefully considered by the Council before being subjected to consideration by the European Parliament as well as by national Parliaments.

Eastern European Parliamentarians

73. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to meet Members of Parliaments of Warsaw pact countries to discuss parliamentary and democratic procedures.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that there has been a huge increase in contacts with parliamentarians and others in eastern Europe following the dramatic and most welcome developments there in the past few months. Naturally I have played a full part in that and I look forward to maintaining such contacts.

Mr. Winnick: How does the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain to those parliamentarians that while their countries are, we hope, beginning to establish the rule of law and parliamentary democracy, in Britain the Tory Government have taken away the right of many people working in local government to stand for election in another local authority, to stand for election to Parliament or to take part in any political activity? How can he justify his action of six years ago, when he took away the right of people to belong to a trade union if they happened to be working at GCHQ? Is it not odd that while east European countries are heading towards democracy, our democratic process is being undermined?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The oddity is entirely in the hon. Gentleman's perception. The decisions taken by the Government in relation to trade union membership at GCHQ have been tested and upheld in many places. The decisions taken about the relationship between local government membership and party-political representation were strongly debated in this House and further debated in the other place. The conclusion that emerged was the result of proper consideration in both Houses of a democratic Parliament.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that people emerging from a Socialist paradise in the East are unlikely to want lessons on parliamentary democracy from Socialists in the West?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have noticed that they tend to look toward the Government for instruction in these matters.

Mr. Alton: Following the announcement last Thursday by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs that funding would be available to political parties in this House which they would be able to make available to parties in eastern Europe, can the Leader of the House say how much money will be available? Bearing in mind that elections are already under way in eastern Europe, will he give us the timetable? Are the organisations that the Government have in mind similar to foundations such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung in West Germany?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will realise that such help is being given in a number of different ways, ranging from the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the Great Britain/East Europe centre; a know-how fund for Poland and other countries is also available. I will put the hon. Gentleman's question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would be a good idea for people from eastern Europe to explain both to Socialists in this House and to the British public why they are getting rid of nationalisation, high taxation and a bureaucratic state and looking towards the British Government's privatisation policies as the way forward for a free society?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that Conservative Members are certainly of one mind with my hon. Friend. The process of privatisation has been undertaken not just in eastern Europe but in countries around the world, following the example set by the Government of this country.

Dr. Cunningham: Welcome though the contacts with developing democracies in eastern Europe will be, will the Leader of the House say whether his colleagues in the Department of the Environment have advised the new democratic Governments to introduce more than 50 Acts of Parliament taking away powers from the local level and giving them to Ministers? Have they been advised to abolish the existing councils for their capital cities? How many requests has the Leader of the House had from eastern European Governments about the advantages of introducing a poll tax in their countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One cannot but admire the one-track nature of the hon. Gentleman's mind. Certainly, one of the proposals that we commend to democratic countries in eastern Europe is for a sensible pattern of local government taxation such as exists in this country.

Car Park (Car Washing)

74. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received regarding the washing of hon. and right hon. Members' cars in the Members' car park.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Following representations by the staff side of the House of Commons Whitley committee, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has confirmed that attendants in the underground car park may, by private arrangement, wash Members' cars out of duty hours.

Mr. Yeo: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer, but is he aware that the valuable freedom of hon. Members to have their cars washed at their own expense in the Members' car park has recently been substantially curtailed? Knowing how extremely valuable and highly regarded that facility is, will he look into the matter again to see whether it is possible to make it easier rather than more difficult for Members to have their cars washed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will understand that the matter was considered, no doubt with the detailed attention that it deserves, by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee on 19 February. Its conclusion was arrived at on the basis that the service to which my hon. Friend refers is a voluntary service undertaken by private arrangement out of duty hours. It has been agreed by the authorities on that basis and will continue as such.

Catering

76. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward propals to amalgamate the catering departments of the Houses of Lords and Commons; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no such plans.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there could be savings in amalgamating the Refreshment Departments of the House of Lords and the House of Commons and that it would be beneficial as well as convivial for Members of both Houses to meet over meals? Does he agree that Members of this House would enjoy going to sit on the long benches in the House of Lords Dining Room, as much as the Lords would enjoy coming to the House of Commons Cafeteria?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not so familiar as my hon. Friend obviously is with the wide range of facilities available in the other place.

Mr. Dickens: My right hon. and learned Friend will be.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is a pleasure to which many hon. Members from both sides of the House can look forward in the distant future. There are no doubt sensible reasons for considering a higher degree of co-operation between the catering Departments at both ends of the Palace of Westminster. However, historical and constitutional separations make that process of co-operation more than usually difficult.

Points of Order

3.34 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had any notification from Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers that they want to make a statement on the outcome of the election in Nicaragua, which has seen the destruction of another Socialist icon and the rejection, once and for all, of the concept that the Sandinistas are a popular regime rather than one that was imposed on the people?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no such request today.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed the arrival at 3.30 pm of the Government Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip on the Front Bench. Could this have been a matter of their concern to support question 78, which is on providing accommodation for the archives of Government Chief Whips? Would they like recorded—if they are not too profane—their expletives when they have to persuade their colleagues to accept the community charge——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was an interesting question, but we did not reach it.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of the exchanges during questions to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I seek your guidance on the length of time for questions. I tried to temper my comments on the community charge in Lancashire so as to give adequate time for a response. I could have gone on at some length about reductions in the charge that could have resulted if Lancashire had not topped up its balances—£60 off the community charge——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman had a jolly good run on that; I do not think that he can have another bite at it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you have received a report about the incident on Friday when my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) moved the Second Reading of his Bill on access to medical records. At 2.28 pm the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) rose to say that he supported the Bill, and proceeded to talk it out. We asked for a report from the Deputy Speaker to be passed on to you, because we have reason to believe that the hon. Member for Esher has been linked with certain medical firms——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I read about that in *Hansard*. I was not asked for a report. In any case, if the hon. Gentleman is making that allegation, he must make it, not to me, but to the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), Mr. Speaker.

It is important that Ministers be aware of the concern among Conservative Members that there should be a statement on Nicaragua, especially as we want to know what the view of the Opposition will be—particularly that of the hon. Member for Newham, North East (Mr. Banks), who has just lost the use of the aeroplane that he has enjoyed in the past few years.

Mr. Speaker: Come on.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), Mr. Speaker.

Was Mr. Deputy Speaker aware at the time of the debate on Friday that the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) was a director of a company called Angel Care UK Limited——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make allegations of that sort, he knows exactly what to do: he must make them, not here, but to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which is directly responsible for such matters.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will understand that Back-Bench Members look on Question Time, and particularly on supplementary questions, as an opportunity to obtain answers to their questions. You will have noticed that during Question Time today Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen—especially the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who asked two questions—took up an inordinate amount of time asking questions, thereby preventing Back-Bench Members from getting in. I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. Is it not about time these people were advised that Back-Bench Members want to participate?

Mr. Speaker: Quite right. I am strongly in favour of short supplementary questions, which tend to lead to short supplementary answers. I agree that questions asked today by hon. Members on both sides of the House were rather long.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Oh!

Dr. Cunningham: Given that Conservative Members raised the issue in the first place, it ill becomes them to groan when I decide to respond. In the interests of well-informed debate on all sides, I wanted to ensure that the question of the higher levels of poll tax in Tory shires and Tory councils would be raised.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This seems to be developing into an extension of Question Time on the part of those Members who, sadly, could not be called earlier today. I shall take only points of order that I can deal with because we have a busy day ahead of us.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask for your advice because I am somewhat confused about question No. 64. I should like to know whether it was right to phrase it in that way or whether the Table Office should have phrased it differently. It talks about,

"revenues from his properties in Lancashire."

Surely the point is that the Duke of Lancaster is Her Majesty the Queen. Therefore, these are Crown properties, and not the properties of any Minister or of any body other than the Crown. On that basis I should like to know precisely how a question in relation to the Duchy of

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

Lancaster should be phrased. The Duchy of Lancaster is an ethereal body that does not exist. The real body is the Crown and Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. I think that this is what one might call shorthand for the properties for which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has responsibility. Perhaps the question should have appeared in that form on the Order Paper.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On occasion you ask hon. Members to confine themselves to a narrow question and to concern themselves solely with Lancashire. If I had been given the freedom that was given to the Front-Bench spokesman for the Opposition, I would have been able to tell the House about Cleveland and the high community charge there——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should prefer the hon. Member not to do that now.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of all hon. Members, will you make clear precisely the procedure to be followed about the declaration of interests? Is it satisfactory for hon. Members simply to record them in the Register of Members' Interests and not to make any further reference to any interests when they rise to speak on a matter in which they clearly have an interest or in which it could be believed that they had an interest? Would it not be better if, when hon. Members with an interest rise to speak, they do not just leave the matter at something written in the book but declare the interest orally to the House? That would have got us round the difficulty that we encountered on Friday with the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same matter?

Mr. Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, I shall hear it and deal with the matter all at once.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, because the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was about my good self. I make it clear that I was not notified that this matter would be raised today, and that is unfortunate. As I said on Friday, I had no relevant interest to disclose in relation to the speech that I made. Whether Opposition Members approve or disapprove of that speech, I hope that they will take that as the final word.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we will leave the matter at that.

Mr. Dickens: I must declare an interest.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may do so in a minute. This is a serious matter. I draw the attention of the House to Standing Order No. 128. The House knows that it is not necessary to declare an interest at Question Time, but that in a debate, if a Member has a direct interest, he would always declare it.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking it yet.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to declare an interest which I should declare every day of the week: I hate Socialism.

Mr. Alan Williams: It is a well-established rule of this House that any Member making a speech on a topic in which he has an interest should declare that interest. I am sure it will be agreed that this matter is particularly sensitive when, in the last two minutes of private Members' time on a Friday, the purpose of an intervention may be to block progress——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member, who was here, heard the hon. Gentleman say that he had no such interest—*[Interruption.]*

Order. We in this Chamber are honourable Members.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Housing Corporation Advances (Increase of Limit) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Orders of the Day

Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Mr Speaker: The only amendment selected is amendment No. 3.

Clause 1

LICENSED PREMISES: APPLICATION OF LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT 1954, PART II

3.45 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 31, at end insert:

"3A. Section 38 (Restriction on agreements excluding provisions of Part II) of the 1954 Act shall be read and have effect as if there were added the following subsection—

'(5) Paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of this section shall not apply where the tenancy to be granted is to be of premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor for consumption on the premises, except where the holding of the licence is merely incidental to another purpose.'."

The purpose of this amendment is to outlaw the practice of contracting-out in the relationship between brewers and their pub tenants. The Bill relates to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, which concerns the relationship between a landlord and a tenant in the case of a shop or other commercial premises. The 1954 Act, which was modified by the Law of Property Act 1969, includes a provision that allows landlords and their tenants to agree mutually to contract-out. The terms of the 1954 Act are defensible in the context of the circumstances that existed then. The country was trying to rebuild its economy at a time when many urban areas were shattered in the aftermath of the second world war and at a time when many suburban areas had been broken up and were trying to revitalise themselves, against quite difficult odds. At that time the House felt that it would be constructive to have in the 1954 Act a provision giving some more leeway than might otherwise have existed in relation to contracts between landlords and their tenants. In a sense, it was a question of allowing tenants to try to establish businesses in those difficult circumstances without being hamstrung by regulations and rules that probably were not required.

Of course, those tenants had many oportunities to locate in other areas nearby. At that time the House felt that where a landlord and his tenant were of the opinion that they could benefit mutually by coming to their own contractual arrangements, rather than by being tied by the strict terms of the Act, it was permissible for them, provided that they applied to the court, to be contracted-out of the specific terms of the Act.

The big difference between the position then and the present situation is that there is not now the same shortage of business accommodation. In many of the areas, especially urban areas, in which pubs are located there is sometimes a glut of accommodation. That rather tilts the balance of power in favour of the landlord and leaves the tenant exposed to the vagaries of the marketplace. In addition, in the case of the brewery, the landlord often is not only the body owning the public house, which is at the retail end, but the organisation that dictates the nature of the product retailed in those premises dictates the conditions under which the product is retailed, and dictates the general environment in which it is retailed. I refer to such things as amusement machines, pin-ball games, and so on, all of which are often controlled by the landlord. So, in the beer industry, the relationship between landlord and tenant is quite different from that which generally pertains between landlord and tenant in the case of an ordinary commercial business.

I hope that the House acknowledges that distinction, because it was certainly felt in Committee that it exists. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will acknowledge also that it is not a simple relationship between a brewery landlord and a tenant but one that requires special consideration not always consistent with that given to the usual relationship between a landlord and tenant.

The nature of the relationship is essentially why the Monopolies and Mergers Commission identified that a complex monopoly exists. It is not a monopoly simply between one brewery and a number of retailers, but a complex monopoly among brewers and retailers. The question is whether the Bill provides the necessary and proper balance in the relationship between the brewery and a pub tenant. That is the guts of the Bill. Is the balance right?

I am sure that the House accepts that the relationship cannot be one way. If it is tilted too far in favour of the landlord, inevitably it will serve as a disincentive for landlords to establish a relationship with potential tenants. If it is tilted too far in favour of the tenant, that will discourage landlords. That argument is accepted by the National Licensed Victuallers Association, and I share its view that it is crucial to strike the right balance.

If the House does not accept the amendment, the important goal of achieving the right balance will not be met. Brewers are a powerful body of people and a powerful lobby. They will inevitably place undue pressure on tenants to exclude themselves from the terms of the Bill. If it is possible for brewers to reach a bilateral arrangement not covered by statute, and if they feel it is in their interests to seek such an agreement, it is only human nature that they will do so. If the amendment is not accepted, the balance of power will be tilted too far in the brewers' favour, and they will then be able to exercise too much power over prospective tenants.

If the Bill was not sympathetic to brewers, the Brewers Society, which is a powerful lobby, would have lobbied right hon. and hon. Members every day between the Committee stage and Report to ensure that the brewers' case was heard. I have heard of no lobbying of any significance in the weeks between the Committee stage and now. Compare that silence with the £6 million campaign that the Brewers Society conducted against the MMC's report and recommendations of 1988 and 1989. Although the Bill appears on the face of it to sympathise with the tenant and to be balanced, in fact it is tilted very much in favour of the brewery. The amendment is crucial if we are to give the legislation teeth.

There is no doubt in my mind that brewers will put the heat on potential tenants.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Is it not a fact that the brewers have already exerted pressure on hon. Members?

[Mr. Don Dixon]

A programme was recently shown on television, either on Channel 2 or 4, in which the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) was quoted as saying that pressure had been put on him and his colleagues by the brewers since the Monopoly and Mergers Commission report had been published. If they can put that sort of pressure on independent Members of Parliament, can my hon. Friend imagine the amount of pressure that they can put on tenants who rent houses from the brewers?

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that point. I might have been more grateful if he had not raised it, because he has stolen it from my text. However, this is a real worry, and I recall the submission made by the hon. Member for Beverley, who said that he felt that many Conservative Members had had to face great pressure from the Brewers Society which wanted them to defend its position, to defend the brewers and to examine the legislation with that borne carefully in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has made an important point. If hon. Members find it difficult to face up to the power of the brewers' lobby—and there was ample evidence of that being the case from the reaction of many hon. Members to the original proposals of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—what chance does the tenant of a pub have against the might of the brewers?

Later in my contribution I hope to give examples of the changes that are taking place in the industry which may cause undue pressure to be put on tenants. Some of the changes in the industry are taking place for normal economic reasons. As the patterns of urban and rural development change, it is necessary to have new outlets to retail beer. There are always changes in the industry, and there is always a need to change the location of public houses. Some pubs are more viable than others which fall out of favour.

Some weeks ago I was in an old dockland area in Salford where there no doubt used to be many old broken-down, sawdust-floored pubs which have now gone. The pubs there now are very posh and provide an upmarket service. I am sure that the relationship between tenant and brewer will be different in that area now. The brewer will have a different attitude to the location patterns of pubs and whether directly to manage pubs or to have tenanted houses or free houses. The type of tenant who might be able to face the new challenge in that part of Salford might be quite different from the tenant who originally took the house. So changes are taking place, and I recognise that.

However, other changes are taking place in the industry which are not due to everyday economic circumstances, but because of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and the fact that it pointed out that competition was crucial to the industry and that because of the complex monopoly position that competition was not present—the brewers were making excessive profits and the consumers were paying excessive prices. All sorts of examples have been quoted to show that.

The Government then introduced regulations that in some cases changed the relationship between the brewer and the tenant of the pub. Some of the regulations were supported by the Opposition when they were debated in the House in December, but we felt that we could not give our support to others. The Opposition put forward a number of counter proposals which the Minister, in his wisdom, was not able to accept. In the light of what has happened since December, perhaps the Minister will want to reconsider what has happened in the industry, particularly in relation to one case which I shall cite which illustrates one of the major changes taking place.

If I were of a mind, and if the House was sufficiently tolerant to allow me to do so, I could speak for a considerable time on the number of changes, but I hope that it will be sufficient for me to highlight four significant changes in the relationship between the landlord and the tenant during the past few months. All these changes, I believe, are a direct result of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report and the orders passed in the House in December. They are all relevant to different parts of the market place, and I believe that they all demonstrate the weakness of the tenant's position.

4 pm

Courage and Grand Metropolitan are both large concerns, and both traditionally own both brewery and pub interests; some of the pubs have been directly managed, others tenanted. Courage has 5,002 pubs in this country, 3,673 of which are tenanted. The current bilateral relationship between Courage and its tenants has been established over a period, sometimes through negotiation with trade unions or the National Licensed Victuallers Association.

Those pubs are about to be transferred in a swap arrangement to Grand Metropolitan, which has different contractual arrangements with its tenants. Although there will obviously be some overlap, Grand Metropolitan's general approach to marketing may prove entirely different from the approach adopted by Courage in recent months. The tenants now face the difficult decision whether to accept new contracts. Initially Grand Metropolitan will be bound by the contracts that it has inherited, but as their tenancies come up for renewal tenants will find themselves faced with new terms and conditions that may be entirely different from those of Courage, and will thus be placed in a vulnerable position. Grand Metropolitan may have its eye on another market place. According to evidence accepted on both sides of the House, most tenancies are for three years or less, so the tenants will have to face their new circumstances fairly soon.

Another example is Scottish and Newcastle, which occupies a different sector of the market. The company was originally one of the big six, but, under the new arrangements following the adoption of the orders in December, any company with fewer than 2,000 pubs became bound by less severe regulations than those with more than 2,000; indeed, in most cases they were bound by no regulations at all. Scottish and Newcastle has 2,287 pubs. Rather than face up to its new responsibilities, the brewery intends to dispose of 250, which means that tenants will either be bound by a new contract with the new owners, or will end up out of work because of the closure of their tenancies.

The changes will affect not only the major sector of the market—or even the regional sector of which Scottish and Newcastle probably considers itself a part—but the small sector. Fuller, Smith and Turner, a London brewery, has 120 pubs of which 92 are tenanted. It has already told its

tenants that, because of the change in the regulations, it intends to draw up new contracts, not for some of them —as Scottish and Newcastle has done—but for all of them.

Mansfield brewery, in a more rural market, has 306 pubs, of which 196 are tenanted. It has said that it will introduce new contracts as the old ones expire, involving different terms and conditions. That, too, is a result of the changes in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

Dramatic changes are taking place. An editorial in *Brewing Review* suggested that they are more dramatic than any changes that have taken place in the industry for many years. This is at a time when the regulations and the law governing the relationship between landlord and tenant are changing. It is therefore crucial to get the balance right and ensure that there is equity and power sharing between the landlord and the tenant.

Amendment No. 3 is the key amendment. It will determine whether the Government have introduced fair and balanced legislation that will improve competition and give everyone a bit of the action. If the amendment falls, brewers will have all the power and will begin to put undue pressure on their tenants, and the Bill will be innocuous and spineless. Competition in the industry will suffer as a result of an already complex monopoly becoming an even more complex monopoly.

Mr. Dixon: Is not one of the problems that, by July 1992, 10 per cent. of the tenants will fall foul of the measure? We tried to resolve the problem in Committee, but the Government resisted our amendment, which we withdrew after the Minister's reply. It is important to point out that July 1992 is the operative date when brewers will be able to put pressure on tenants.

Mr. Henderson: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. It suggests that the Government have not been selective in refusing to give way. They have refused to give way on numerous proposals that have been made, in the House and in Committee, both by Opposition Members and by those who support the Government.

If the House believes that the measure should lead to fairness and a balance of power, the different relationship between a pub landlord and a pub tenant and between a shop landlord and a shop tenant should be recognised in the legislation. Great changes are taking place in the industry. We need to achieve the right relationship so as to ensure that the tenant has appropriate power. If the Government do not accept the amendment, the legislation will be completely worthless. Even at this late stage, I hope that the Minister will accept the argument that has been advanced not only by the Opposition but by Conservative Members.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): First, I have to declare an interest. I am the parliamentary adviser to the National Licensed Victuallers Association.

This matter was debated in Committee, but it is right to air it again on the Floor of the House. My hon. Friend the Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) has already pointed out that it is crucial to the effective operation of the Bill.

All hon. Members believe that the Government are moving in the right direction by extending the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 to licensed premises. The difference between the Opposition and the Government is over whether their laudable intentions will be frustrated if the contracting-out provisions are allowed to apply to licensed premises. Many Opposition Members believe that they will. As my hon. Friend said, the measure provides for contracting-out if the landlord and tenant agree and if they can obtain the consent of the court.

In nine out of 10 cases there is no incentive for the landlord or the tenant to wish to contract out. The owner of a butcher's shop, a draper's shop or an office block is quite content to receive his rent, subject to the proper reviews, and, as long as the premises are properly maintained, he has no further interest in the business. He is not manufacturing the goods that are being sold in the shop. That is the essential difference between those premises and licensed premises as, clearly, a brewery company owning a tied house has a direct interest in the business which the tenant is running in those premises. In those circumstances, it may well be that the landlord company does not wish to be restricted even by the modest protection that the Bill will provide for the tenant. If a company does not wish to be so restricted, it has only to require the tenant to agree to contract-out.

It is nonsense to suggest that a tenant who wishes to renew his existing tenancy under a new agreement, or a would-be tenant who wishes to enter the licensed trade for the first time, is in an equal negotiating position with the landlord. Of course he is not, because the landlord owns the premises. If the landlord decides to contract-out, it is no good the tenant saying that he does not wish to contract-out because he simply will not have his tenancy renewed or if he is a newcomer, he will not get the tenancy in the first place. That is at the heart of the problem.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommended that contracting-out should not be permitted for licensed premises. Having made it quite clear that it was considering the matter in terms of competition, it stated in paragraph 12.138:

> "We have set out in some detail our view that the tenants of on-licensed premises are not, under the present arrangements, able fully to act as independent businessmen".

It continued in paragraph 12.141:

> "we recommend that there should be no right on the part of the parties to contract out of the provsions contained in Part II of that Act, except for a preliminary period not exceeding one year."

It was quite clear that to improve competition and enhance the position of licensees as independent business men, contracting-out of the Landlord and Tenant Act should not be allowed in that type of business.

The Opposition and the National Licensed Victuallers Association think that the former Secretary of State Lord Young got it right when he said that he was minded to implement that and other recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. He was certainly wrong about some other recommendations, but he was undoubtedly right about the narrow section of the report that related to the rights of tenants, the protection of tenants and the relationship between tenants and landlords.

It is interesting that the Opposition seek to further the Government's alleged competition policy and their policy of protecting the interests of small businesses, and the Minister is opposing that. It is ironic, but it is a fact. The Opposition are on the side of the small businesses and, unfortunately, the Government are on the side of the big businesses, and, in the case of a conflict, the rights of the small businesses—the tenant licensees—will not be protected.

[Mr. Stan Crowther]

We are entitled to ask why the Government did that complete about-turn. The then Secretary of State said that he was minded to implement those recommendations, yet within a few weeks he changed his mind. He decided that the extra protection for tenants that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission had recommended should not be implemented. Since then, we have been told of the reason for that. The Brewers Society and some brewery companies told Ministers that they did not like that proposal. That much was made crystal clear in mid-1989, long before the Bill appeared.

4.15 pm

There are several other proposals that the brewers do not like, but nevertheless the Government will proceed with them. The large brewers are not happy about the disposal of many tied houses, and weakening the tie among those that remain. Why are the Government proceeding with the proposals that brewers do not like — tied houses, guest beers and so on—but dropping the proposals on the protection of tenants?

That is clearly an example of sweetening the pill. Brewers will have a bitter pill to swallow, but it appears to me that Ministers believe that by abandoning the proposal to give tenants additional protection that bitter pill will be sweetened. The Government are sacrificing the interests of tenants, who have been made pawns in this high-powered game between the Government and the brewers.

I am convinced that many brewers will not insist on contracting-out, and I have been assured on that point by several representatives of large breweries, but the fact that the Brewers Society has insisted that the contracting-out provisions remain in the Bill must mean that in certain cases brewers intend to use them. Otherwise, there would be no point in its insisting that those provisions should remain in the legislation.

I do not doubt the good faith of the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs. I am convinced, and have been throughout, that, within the constraints imposed on him, he is anxious to do his best for his tenants. I should welcome his assurance that contracting-out will be closely monitored. I shall start that sentence again when the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) has stopped talking to him. Will he assure us that he will monitor contracting-out and that if it appears excessive he will consider introducing new legislation to stop it?

That is a fair request, because if contracting-out takes place on a significant scale the purpose of the Bill will be destroyed. I am sure that the Under-Secretary is anxious to see the Bill operated properly and to ensure that the protection that he wishes to provide tenants is in place. I am, therefore, sure that he would not be happy if contracting-out took place on a large scale. I hope that he will assure us that the position will be monitored and that if there is an abuse of contracting-out new legislation will be introduced.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): This classic issue presents itself repeatedly and involves the difference between the requirement for more competition and freedom, which will stimulate more business and industry, and the requirement to protect the weaker party. It arises particularly in landlord and tenant legislation and it is what the tenant protection elements of the law have been all about for many years. By and large, there is a tendency to err on the side of the tenant and to protect his interests against those of the landlord. Successive Governments, including the present Conservative Government, have operated in that way, but some of us believe that the protective elements tend to frustrate the purpose of the new laws.

I do not share the view of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther), who represents certain interests, that this is a sinister arrangement to sweeeten the pill for the brewer. As I represent the brewing centre of England and, of course, have a well-known and declared interest on that industry's behalf, one would not expect me to accept the view that the brewers aim to exploit tenants by including in the Bill a provision whereby brewers can easily opt out of the restriction.

From time to time, there will be a temptation to take advantage of the contracting-out provision. That is human and business nature. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission reached that conclusion in its report. This issue is a potential irritant between landlord and tenants. In a sense, I am speaking on behalf not of the great brewers of Burton upon Trent but of the licensees, the tenants of the great public houses, as the weaker party to the contract. I therefore have a common cause with the hon. Member for Rotherham.

The Government should build into the Bill a mite more protection for the licensed victualler—the tenant. I make that claim because it would be better for the relationships that are to exist between landlord and tenant. The tenant should not think that a provision in the legislation will work against his interests. I also make that claim because the Government would not wish to be seen to introduce a measure erring on the side of the brewer and against the tenant. Peculiarly, perhaps, I thus find myself speaking against the interests that I normally represent. Not all the brewers in Burton upon Trent are big—there are some very small ones such as Burton Bridge and Heritage.

In order that justice may be seen to be done, any temptation to think that the contracting-out provisions are built in for the benefit of the stronger party should be mitigated by more action than is shown in the Bill. On balance, the Government should take seriously the amendments that have been tabled and be prepared to amend the Bill, although perhaps not precisely in those terms, to give more confidence to licensees. I know the brewers in my constituency very well and I can state that view, knowing that it is not their intention to exploit licensees. It may not, strictly speaking, be necessary to make such a change in the Bill but so that everybody may confidently believe that the Bill is even-handed and will protect licensees, I ask that the proposed change or a change approximating to it should be introduced.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I have listened carefully to the arguments advanced by the Opposition and by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). I shall deal with some of the points that they made and then state the Government's position on this important subject.

It is true that the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 arose out of the rebuilding of urban areas—against a different background. But the important clause in the Bill is based on legislation introduced by the Labour Administration in 1969, against a very different background indeed, and I think that the reasons given by that Labour Government

hold true today. The Labour Government were concerned about the impact on the availability of business accommodation that would follow if a contracting-out clause were not introduced. The then Solicitor-General made the matter clear:

"one must hold a balance between what is needed for the effective protection of tenants and what would fetter freedom of contract to such an extent that lettings were discouraged and worthwhile accommodation left unoccupied."—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1969; Vol. 785, c. 1424.]

That is the nub of our case. The Government accept the wisdom of the Labour proposal in 1969, which created a balance in tenants' and landlords' rights that has lasted for the past 21 years and which will now be applied to include brewing landlords and their tenants, too. The provision was based on an independent study from the Law Commission, which also expressed its fears about the non-availability of tenancies. It was against that background that the 1969 amendments to the 1954 Act were made.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) rightly said that the issue before the House is whether we have struck the right balance between landlords' and tenants' interests. The House is united in wanting to achieve a fair balance between landlord and tenant which provides something in the commercial arrangement for the benefit of both parties so that enough tenancies are available. The Government contend that that is best supplied in the form of the balance in the 1954 Act as amended in 1969.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North also asked the important question whether undue pressure could be exerted on tenants as a result of the contracting-out proposal. It may be helpful if I remind the House how the contracting-out proposal works. Tenant and landlord have to go jointly to the court and seek its permission to have a contracted-out tenancy under the 1954 Act. That is, in itself, a protection against the very kind of undue pressure against which hon. Members wish to guard. The landlord and the tenant need to take separate legal advice from their lawyers and to go to court, and—among other things—the court must satisfy itself that both parties to the agreement know what they are entering into and understand the basis on which they are making their joint application. That is an important safeguard built into the judicial process relating to contracting-out.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend is quite right that there is provision for taking legal advice on going to court, but that can only make a licensee aware of what his rights are; it will not affect the pressure that may be placed on him to go ahead with the matter even though he knows what his rights are. That is what bothers hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is one thing not to know one's rights; it is another to know one's rights and not to want to act because one feels that one is under pressure.

Mr. Redwood: I think that my hon. and learned Friend agrees that there is an important safeguard against a tenant unknowingly entering into a contract agreement because he has not been properly advised or there is not a formal process.

4.30 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I apologise for not being present throughout the proceedings, but the Isle of Wight ferries were delayed by the severe weather. The Isle of Wight licensed victuallers association is worried about this point. As my hon. Friend knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) and I have the largest number of tied houses in the Whitbread brewery. The association is concerned that both new and existing tenancies may be put under considerable pressure, particularly when they take in host beer. Will the tenants negotiate as individuals? If so, they will face the considerable power of a large company. Surely that does not put tenants in a good position.

Mr. Redwood: The contract is entered into freely between two parties and the balance of power depends on the individual strengths of the local markets and the circumstances at the time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Redwood: If I may, I shall deal with one point at a time. That may be helpful to the House and it is difficult to deal with three at a time.

The tenant will have the advice that he wants, for example, from the NLVA, which is diligent and helpful, and from his legal adviser. The worry is that if such an arrangement is not allowed, many people who want tenancies simply will not be able to get them. We should remember that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission exempted the first 12 months in its recommendation, specifically because many people who want to become tenants will have no track record and, therefore, will be unlikely to qualify as tenants, so a trial period is needed for them to introduce themselves to the brewers and for the brewers to make an assessment. Unfortunately, if that is only for 12 months and not thereafter, the market will become ossified and many subsequent potential new entrants will not have the same facility as those in the 12-month period.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Can my hon. Friend deal with the fear that, although there is contracting-out, if third parties or a potential tenant does not agree to contract-out, a landlord will be inclined to find someone who will and say to the others, "If you won't, they will, so I will give it to them"?

Mr. Redwood: The purpose of the legislation is to give tenants greater security of tenure. The House is losing sight of the fundamental reason why the House is united on the principle of extending landlord-tenant protection to those categories of tenant. It would not be possible for a brewer to force out a tenant on that basis, unless he could terminate the tenancy for one of the restricted reasons given in the landlord and tenant legislation. That is protection which tenants do not have now which is why the NLVA urged me to introduce the Bill as soon as possible. The Government have introduced it at the earliest available opportunity to extend that protection as soon as the Bill can receive Royal Assent and the due number of weeks have passed for it to come into effect.

Mr. Crowther: Will the Minister address the following scenario? A tenant, who has been running his business for a long time and has developed a good business, even without the benefit of landlord and tenant legislation

[Mr. Crowther]

protection, may think that because this Bill is passed he will have protection under this legislation. When his existing tenancy expires, he will start talking to the landlord about his new tenancy which he will expect to be covered by landlord and tenant legislation protection. The landlord will say, "Hang on, I have decided that we shall contract-out." The tenant will say, "Surely a new Bill has gone through Parliament." The landlord will say, "I cannot help that. You will agree to go with me to the court and seek consent for contracting-out. Otherwise, your tenancy is finished and I shall find a new tenant." How will that problem be overcome? That is most worrying and I should like the Minister to comment on it.

Mr. Redwood: The purpose of the legislation for all the tenancies covered by it is to necessitate, for the first time for pub tenancies, that a landlord has one of a limited number of reasons for terminating a tenancy. That is why the extra protection is being granted by the legislation. That is the point of it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I took an office in my constituency under precisely those conditions, with an opting-out clause. I had no choice as the landlord insisted on that, so I went along with it. For an office, that does not matter that much, but for a tenancy the entire living depends on the location. The Minister is saying both that tenants need protection against landlords who may not operate fairly, and that protection should be removed for precisely those landlords against whom the tenants need protecting.

Mr. Redwood: I am not doing that. The legislation will provide the protection that all hon. Members want. After that, where the case is governed by the legislation, there will be a limited number of circumstances in which the tenancy can be terminated. That is why everyone agrees that we should extend that protection. It is rather similar to the good debate in Committee on the question of the widows' year and the protection for them. We all agreed that a widow should not be driven out of the tenancy on the death of her husband. However, the protection offered in the legislation is more generous and comprehensive for the widow, if she is the nominated successor of the deceased publican, than would have been the case under the amendments proposed in Committee, which is why I did not accept them. It is not that I wish widows to end up on the streets, but that I believe that the balance of legislation offers them a better break than the more limited proposal in the amendment. There is a great deal of good news in this legislation. The Government are pleased to be introducing it and I know that it is welcomed by tenants, as the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) kindly said. That is the basis of the settlement.

I wish to deal with points that are relevant to the amendment. First, the Government are concerned not to reduce the number of tenancies available by introducing the wrong type of legislation to govern tenant security. One of the consequences of the Opposition's proposal is likely to be a reduction in the number of tenancies. That would be bad news for a number of people who would like to become tenants, and even for those who are already tenants. It might intensify the search for gateway exits by the landlord breweries for certain tenancies.

Secondly, the amendment would be especially harsh on the untried entrant—the person who wishes to enter the pub trade and who may turn out to be a good landlord, providing more life and change in landlord-tenant business. Without that type of contracted-out tenancy arrangement, it would be difficult to have the right number of new entrants coming forward, and thereby allow brewers to give them the opportunity to prove themselves.

Thirdly, there is a code of practice operated by the Brewers Society, which I know the hon. Member for Rotherham has welcomed. It will continue to be used by many reputable brewers, in addition to the provisions in the legislation that will become legally binding.

I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North said about new developments and changes in the type of pubs on offer within new town centres. The hon. Gentleman makes my fourth point for me. It is because it is a changing industry where the location and style of pubs are changing, and new pubs are becoming available in new types of development, that there needs to be some flexibility to allow new entrants and those who wish to experiment with a different style of tenancy within the pub framework. That may necessitate different marketing and a different approach to the business. That is what the provision in the Law of Property Act 1969 facilitates and permits.

I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North that amendment No. 3 is the key amendment by which to judge the legislation. I read in the *Morning Advertiser* on 26 February that three matters were crucial to the test of the legislation and that there would be an opportunity to debate all of them on amendments today. It referred to the inclusion of a right-to-buy clause, and the introduction of the widows' year. The hon. Gentleman might concede that his amendment is not the crucial one by which to judge the balance of the legislation. The hon. Gentleman is nodding, so he is taking back his words. There are a number of ways to judge the balance in the legislation between landlords and tenants.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Minister accept that, of the amendments that we tabled, No. 3 is the key one? Had other amendments been called that would still have been so. I had hoped that the Minister recognised from the contributions of some of his hon. Friends that if the amendment is not accepted many of the other provisions in the Bill will be meaningless. That is the point we have tried to establish.

Mr. Redwood: Therein lays the disagreement between us. I do not believe that the amendment is a key one in relationship to the range of amendments looked at in Committee. This is an important debate, but it is not the most important, over and above the other amendments examined.

I was disappointed that the Opposition did not table new amendments in the light of our debates in Committee. I felt that we had a good Committee stage, that we made a lot of progress, found some common ground and identified some problems. I thought that the Opposition would introduce new amendments that addressed what the Committee had debated. Instead, we are faced with amendments that were debated extensively in Committee.

Those amendments were considerably damaged in Committee because they did not make sense in relation to the balance in the landlord and tenant legislation.

Mr. Dixon: If, in Committee, the Minister agreed with some of the Opposition's arguments, it was up to him to table amendments on Report; it is not up to the Opposition.

Mr. Redwood: If I thought that there were things that needed varying in the balance of the legislation I would have introduced amendments today. If the hon. Gentleman refers back to the text of our Committee proceedings he will see that in a number of important respects, such as the widows' year and the right to buy, the amendments tabled did not offer anything above what already existed in legislation or in the framework that governs the relationship between the landlord and tenant. That is why I am happy with the Bill and recommend it to the House.

I suggest that the House votes against the amendment, as it would not improve the Bill and would make life a lot more difficult for many people who want to become the tenants of brewers.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I submit that the Government's position on this Bill is clear—not for the reasons suggested by the Minister—as they are prone before the brewing interests. Today those interests have been much more fairly represented than those of the tenants.

The amendment concerns contracting out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) is right in saying that the world has changed in the intervening 35 years, but, sadly, some things do not change—for example, the desire of the stronger partner in any agreement to obtain more than his or her fair share of influence over it. There is a strong desire to put one over on the other participant. The Bill fails to address that problem. That is its fundamental weakness and why we tabled the amendment.

We believe that the balance of interest must be maintained, particularly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North has said, at a time of great change in the industry. It is facing a major reorganisation and we remain convinced that it will not benefit the tenant licensee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) is well known for the vigour with which he promotes the case of the National Licensed Victuallers Association. He is also well known for the forthright way in which he declares his interest in any matter on which he speaks to the House. I wish that his example was followed more widely.

My hon. Friend has quoted several detailed examples of the fears that contracting-out raises in the minds of tenants and their representatives. I do not intend to cite any more evidence in support of our case today as I believe it has been proved.

My hon. Friends and I are not minded to accept the Minister's lightly given assurances. We shall press the amendment to a Division because of the Minister's failure to produce any evidence to show that both parties will benefit from the contracting-out provisions.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 64, Noes 160.

Division No. 96 **[4.44 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Blair, Tony
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ron
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Neill, Martin
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*

Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent, and Prince of Wales's consent, signified].

4.54 pm

Mr. Redwood: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

It gives me pleasure to move the Third Reading of this legislation which will represent a major advance in the security offered to tenants. It is part of the package of measures brought forward as a result of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the brewery industry and was designed to give to the tenants of brewers and other pub landlords the same protection as is available to other business tenants.

I know that the measure is welcomed by the National Licensed Victuallers Association and by Members on both sides of the House who wish to see an improvement in the protection of tenants in this important industry. The debates in Committee have been based on an agreement that there should be an improvement in the protection offered to tenants, but there will be detailed debates about the exact nature of that protection, the balance struck in the landlord and tenant legislation and the way in which it might be improved.

I have sought to show in Committee and on the Floor of the House that the well tried and tested balance of this legislation, introduced in 1954 by a Conservative Administration and amended and improved by a Labour Administration in 1969, is the right balance. It will assure tenants that they have reasonable protection of their tenancies and assure landlords that it is still a worthwhile business relationship for them to enter into, so that the supply of tenancies will not dry up. Those seeking to become publicans will thus not be impeded or prevented by over-protective legislation.

During the debate I have been asked by Members to give some assurance about the kind of monitoring that will take place once the legislation has received Royal Assent. I will give two pledges. There will be monitoring of the general balance of landlord and tenant legislation as the Department of the Environment goes about its business as custodians of the corpus of the law and seeing that it is modern and up to date. There will also be monitoring by the competition authorities to ensure that the package of measures presented by the Government to implement the findings of the MMC report have a good impact on the brewing industry as a whole. I have already said to the NLVA that its views will be welcomed through the usual channels if it wishes to make points about the way in which the new settlement for the brewing industry is developing.

Mr. Lawrence: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that assurance. He may have noticed that I deliberately abstained in the last vote because I was not satisfied that he had given that assurance hitherto. Will he go one stage further? Monitoring is all very well, but if it is discovered that something is going wrong and tenants are being exploited by landlords, will he be prepared to suggest amendments to the legislation to provide the kind of protection envisaged in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report?

Mr. Redwood: I have explained that we must examine the legislation as a whole as it affects all business tenancies. I have also explained that there are a number of safeguards within the structure of that well tried and tested legislation —most notably the fact that the tenant and landlord have to go to court. They must jointly and severally present their wish to contract out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, and it is that court process which provides the best guarantee that hon. Members seek.

The legislation must be seen against the background of the changes in the brewing industry. A number of changes were under way anyway because of economic change within the industry. The nature and style of pubs are changing. Brewers were looking again at their types of asset portfolios and deciding whether it was right for them to be both brewers and pub owners. The MMC report, which found against the brewers on a public interest basis, has resulted in measures which will serve to reduce and weaken the ties between brewers and their tenants. That is welcomed on both sides of the House as being in the interests of a more competitive industry and of a better deal for the customers of pubs. There may well also be benefits for the licensees themselves, many of whom want parts of the MMC report implemented and have made representations accordingly.

In the course of the debates, the Committee and the House have examined the position of widows. I said a few minutes ago that the Government were anxious to see that widows were well protected. I repeat that under this legislation they will be able to take over tenancies from their deceased husbands if those husbands have nominated them as their successors. Widows will then have all the rights and obligations of the tenancies previously enjoyed by the landlords who predeceased them. That is an important advance for widows in the industry, which is

distinct from some other sorts of business tenancy in that the business will also often be the living accommodation of the tenant concerned.

The Opposition have raised the issue of the right to buy. In their proposals on that right they limited themselves to the idea that in a limited number of cases there would be an explicit legal right to buy at best price by the tenant. The Government welcome the opportunity for tenants to buy their pubs, but it is in the commercial interests of the brewer to sell his pub for the best price. I am sure that many brewers thinking of selling pubs will also think of offering them to the tenants and will be open to approaches from the tenants if the latter can come up with the sort of good price that the Opposition had in mind. I cannot see that the Opposition amendment would make much difference to that right. Tenants may well buy their pubs more commonly from their brewer landlords and we should be happy about that if it arose out of usual commercial arrangements within the industry.

Contracting out has been extensively debated and in Committee we also looked into the issue of goodwill. Any departures from the regime identified in the landlord and tenant legislation would require careful consideration as they would affect the delicate balance between landlord and tenant set out in the law. However, I have listened carefuly to the comments in Committee and to other representations on this subject, especially to the argument that publicans should be entitled to compensation at a higher multiplier on rateable value than other tenants as they are usually in the same business as their landlords.

Those are arguments of substance on which I continue to hold an open mind. The representations will need to be considered not only from the perspective of the brewing industry but in the wider framework of the provisions for business tenants in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, for which the Department of the Environment has general responsibility. Ministers will be looking at the script of today's debate and the Committee debates for that and for other reasons.

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): I understand that compensation is dealt with by the Department of the Environment, and I hope that it will examine the issue seriously. It was discussed fully on Second Reading and at great length in Committee. Although we should not deviate from the Landlord and Tenant Act more than necessary, this problem must be dealt with because many tenants work in pubs for many years only to find at the end of that time that the brewery can take back the pub and their years of work may have amounted to nothing. If the Department of the Environment could be persuaded to use a higher multiplier, that might overcome some of the objections in this area.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend has professional experience in related subjects. He knows that the valuation of goodwill is extremely difficult and to try to incorporate it in the legislation by means of the amendment moved today would be neither possible nor desirable, given the compexities in the legislation. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comment, but the issue must be examined in the context of level treatment as between different types of business tenancy, and of the balance in the legislation.

By any standards this is the most important advance in tenant protection since the war. The Government are pleased to bring forward this legislation, which was sought by certain Opposition Members as well as by Conservative Members. It was also sought by the NLVA, which has actively put its case across. I hope that I have dealt with the points raised by the Opposition and by the NLVA in its correspondence with many hon. Members. A number of hon. Members have written to me; to list them all would take too long, but I hope that my remarks today and my replies in correspondence will meet their concerns. On issues such as widows' rights, this is an important advance, and I am proud to commend the Bill to the House.

5.7 pm

Mr. Henderson: As the House will recall, the Opposition originally intended to support the Bill in principle, as we said clearly on Second Reading. I trust that that impression was reinforced in Committee. Throughout the Opposition have attempted to put genuine points to the Government, of which there were four or five principal ones in Committee.

The amendment that we moved on Report emphasised what we believed to be the key modification required to give the legislation teeth, but throughout our proceedings the Government have put obstacles in our path. The Minister has already acknowledged that there was a good debate in Committee. There were points of agreement, and some new points with which the Government had considerable sympathy were made. But the Minister's praise for his colleagues in Committee has been more generous than his actions. The truth is that this is the same Bill, on Third Reading, as the one which the Government presented to the House.

The Minister has said that the legislation enhancing tenants' protection is one of the most important pieces of legislation for the industry to have come before the House. I agree, but I enter the caveat that it is only potentially the most important legislation. Because of the Government's failure to agree to modifications put forward by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the legislation will be left considerably weaker than would have been desirable —and necessary to achieve unanimous support.

The Government have not listened to the arguments —for example, about the timing of the legislation. If too long a period is allowed in which contracts can be renewed, undue pressure is placed on tenants by brewers to change contracts to the disadvantage of the tenant. That will also be disadvantageous to competition in the industry, and it will ultimately be disadvantageous to the consumer.

The Government have failed to acknowledge the importance of what is referred to as the right to buy. In Committee the Government acknowledged that that issue will rear its head regularly as brewers begin to dispose of tenancies, swap them and seek to change the nature of tenancy contracts. At that time the issue of what happens to the existing tenant will arise. Will he have rights that accrue because of his commitment to the business and the tenancy? In Committee the Government acknowledged that the Opposition proposals about that were limited and related only to a specific proposal where a brewer disposes of a tenancy to a third party non-brewer. It did not cover a brewer disposing of a tenancy to another brewer.

The suggestion advanced by the Opposition in Committee related to the right to buy so that when a brewer feels that there is a need for commercial or other reasons to dispose of a tenancy the person or body that has the first right to buy is the sitting tenant. There was no

[Mr. Henderson]

question of the brewer losing out if that suggestion had been accepted because encompassed in the suggestion was the clear intention that the brewer would get the appropriate rate for the tenancy.

Surely a tenant who has given a lengthy commitment to a business the success of which has been largely, if not solely, due to the efforts of that tenant should accrue some property rights. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that, and that as the Bill goes to another place he will liaise to achieve modifications to strengthen the legislation. I cannot understand the Government's attitude in this matter. How can they say that a council house tenant can accrue property rights and that the management of a company that is to be disposed of can accrue management rights that would lead to a management buy-out while saying that there is no equivalent accrual for the tenant of a brewery house?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting that there is an absolute right for a management buy-out. There is no such right in business law in Britain. There are voluntary agreements in the same way as there can be voluntary agreements for publicans to buy pubs from their landlords. Business and residential tenancies are on a different basis, and to introduce a right to buy in one sector of the business tenancy market would give rise to all sorts of distortions between this and other types of business.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister should have thought about my point before he intervened. We are not suggesting that. The Government have been keen to dispose of public sector investments such as the National Freight Corporation. The first thing that they try to do is to establish that there is a management buy-out right and management is encouraged to come forward with proposals so that it can continue to earn the property rights that it has established through its commitment to the business. It is completely inconsistent for the Government not to recognise that when a brewery is disposing of a tenanted public house property rights should accrue.

What is so different about pub tenants? Do they not want to make a contribution to the success of a business and earn property rights? Should they not benefit from any improvement in a competitive environment? Have the Government moved away from their original position, and are they now saying that they no longer give ideological support to property rights?

When it suits the Government, there is one law for Conservative ideology and quite another when the Conservative party's significant paymasters seem likely to be tied by legislation. Is the relationship between the brewer and the tenant to be linked to the strong support that brewers have traditionally given to the Conservative party? Has Conservative ideology been extended to that front as well? The Government have failed to face the genuine points made about property rights for pub tenants.

We heard in Committee that the Government have sympathy for the widow's clause, or what could be called the Annie Walker clause. The Minister spoke about that today. Pub tenants will be looking for more than sympathy if the existing legislation is the only protection that may be given to a spouse on the death of his or her partner. If there is any argument about the estate, the surviving spouse could be involved in lengthy arguments about its disposal before being able to clarify whether he or she would be able to continue with the tenancy. Suggestions about that were advanced by the Opposition and others in Committee but they were not accepted. If the Government are prepared further to consider the matter and perhaps to talk to their colleagues in another place, protection for a spouse could be built into the legislation. That would eliminate the worry about whether the spouse is to benefit from any of the estate and would make an important contribution to strengthening the legislation.

The Government have failed to listen to arguments about compensation, some of which were advanced vehemently by Conservative Members. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that he has an open mind on the matter. Pub tenants could lose their tenancies because of a change in circumstances faced by breweries, and those people will be looking for more than an open mind. They will seek a firm commitment that in the event of them having to dispose of their tenancies they will get fair compensation. They do not want to be dragged through endless court cases in an attempt to establish that they have a right to higher compensation.

If such court cases ensue, it is clear that the people involved would be unattractive propositions to secure a future tenancy with the same or another brewer. If compensation were automatic it would be accepted by the industry, and when commercial circumstances changed giving rise to a legitimate need for a brewer to dispose of a pub, nothing would be held against the tenant who insisted on receiving the proper compensation. The tenant would be free to secure another tenancy to protect his living. That is important, and it is not enough for the Government to say that they will keep an open mind. It is incumbent on them to make firm proposals.

The Government have also failed Scotland. In Committee it was said that hundreds of tenancies in Scotland are not covered by the legislation. By and large, the same circumstances exist there, although the market in Scotland is dominated by two brewery groups. Tenants in Scotland will look for some protection. I understand the problems of incorporating Scottish measures in the Bill, but I hope that the Government will bring forward other appropriate legislation to protect the industry and the tenants.

I protest about the Government's failure to take account of the arguments in relation to the contracting-out amendment that has just been lost on a vote. It was important in building up comprehensive and balanced legislation that would regulate the industry in the future and would give the tenant the necessary degree of protection, but would not completely hamstring the brewer. It is absolutely crucial that there should be such a provision. It is not enough for the Government to talk about monitoring what will happen and about being prepared to look at the situation in future.

It is quite clear, from the arguments that were put forward in previous debates in this House, that many hon. Members recognise that this is not a question of landlord and tenant going hand-in-hand to court and saying, "Please may we contract out so that we may make our own arrangements?" That is not the way that the world works; certainly it is not the way that the business world works. Inevitably, human nature being what it is, landlords would

seek to sign agreements that included provision for contracting out of the legislation, and, through time, tenants who did not accept those clauses would not be offered tenancies.

Another danger is that brewery companies could get together and form an unofficial, informal cartel to protect the interests of the brewer landlord. Increasingly, I believe, tenants would be offered only contracts on a mutually agreed basis that were not covered by the Act. People who know the industry will realise that, inevitably, those contracts would be weaker than contracts signed on a free basis but with minimum protection built in by the legislation.

The real test of the Government's willingness to listen to the arguments at all stages of the progress of this Bill is whether they are prepared to face up to the situation that has been presented in relation to contracting out. If they were so prepared, they would face up to the brewers' lobby. In that case, the silence that the brewers have maintained over recent months would soon give way to an outcry from them. I believe that the Government could have faced that situation and that they could have argued with the brewers that, in order to bring about balance, it was necessary to have a different relationship in respect of pub tenancies from that prevailing in the case of shops. Throughout the discussion of the Bill the Government have had ample opportunity to listen to the arguments, to take heed of the points that have been made, and to make accommodations.

I should have liked to be able to recommend firmly that the Opposition support the Third Reading of this Bill. However, those who have followed the debate will be able to draw no conclusion other than that the Government have not been prepared to listen, that there has been no movement from the Government on the main issues. There has been no movement on the issue of timing, on the issue of the right to buy, on the issue of compensation, or on the issue of protection for spouses. Above all, there has been no movement on the vexed question whether pub landlords and brewers should be able to contract out of the legislation.

Thus, the Bill is left ambiguous, unbalanced, spineless, and stacked in favour of the brewer. There are minor areas in which protection has been achieved for the tenant, but in all the circumstances I have grave misgivings about recommending that the Bill be given a Third Reading. My hon. Friend who will wind up for the Opposition may well be able to assist the House by giving some direction on the matter. I hope that, having heard the debate, he will feel that there would be merit in giving the Bill a Third Reading. However, as I have said, I have serious misgivings about letting the legislation proceed to the next stage.

5.25 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I think that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) has gone over the top. Manifestly this is, in essence, a good Bill. It is one that all sides have agreed is necessary and will be for the benefit of the industry. It is about the only good thing to have come out of the whole Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, which the Government adopted too speedily and which will inevitably reduce the number of tied houses—indeed the number of public houses—and may even reduce the number of British breweries as brewers have to choose between the capital value of their manufacturing element and the capital value of their tied house element. Already there are signs that brewers in my constituency are having to reassess their whole contribution to the industry. That is very sad, and it was a bad day when the Government committed themselves to accepting the report.

Today, however, we are dealing with the good aspect of the report—the aspect which gives licensees protection. One must ask whether the Bill is as good as it might be. I think the answer is that it is not perfect but that it is perfectable. I do not for one moment doubt the Government's good intentions. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for the assurances that he has given in response to interventions by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther), by myself and, no doubt, by others expressing concern about monitoring.

I do not doubt that, in general, the brewers' intentions are good. After all, the good of the industry is their concern. That means also the good of the tenants, who are a vital part of the industry. If the tenants are unhappy or dissatisfied, the industry will not be so successful or so flourishing as it would be if they were happy. Nor do I share the conspiracy theory so beloved of the Opposition in regard to this and many other matters. But I am sorry that the Government did not feel able to go one small step further and to commit themselves to ensuring that the legislation would not act unfairly against the tenant in that it might result in undue pressure or inadequate compensation.

Here I must ask myself some questions. If I were a tenant, would I feel terribly reassured by the fact that I could get legal advice as to my legal rights? Would I feel terribly reassured by being able to go before a court and ask it to decide on those rights? Would I feel reassured by the Government's undertaking to monitor the Act, bearing in mind that they have given no further assurance? I must ask myself whether, in some circumstances, I might have fears that I could lose my livelihood and that, in the end, I might have no choice about entering into a contract to which I was very much the weaker party, and under which I might lay myself open to exploitation. When, as a hypothetical licensee, I ask myself those questions I have to reply that in some circumstances I might indeed have just those fears.

This is not a matter of life and death. It is not a matter of the utmost gravity. It is not a resigning matter. It is not a matter that will arise very often. However, it seems to me to be one in respect of which good will—in its common-sense meaning, not its legalistic meaning—might bring a more reassuring response from the Government. It would surely be sensible for the Government to show just a modicum more good will and to give that extra reassurance to a very particular kind of tenant—the tenant who stands to lose not only the roof over his head but his very livelihood and who is, therefore, more subject to pressure even than tenants in other circumstances.

Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether he could not, at this late stage—or, if he would have to get involved in too many consultations before giving a commitment, when the matter comes before another place—give an undertaking that the Government will look again at the aspect of good will; that he will give the further reassurance that he will be prepared to act by further legislation if necessary if his monitoring turns up the conclusion that this legislation is not working as

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

effectively, efficiently or fairly as was intended. Perhaps in the Upper House that matter will be given greater consideration. That is the question that I ask of my hon. Friend, who I know as a reasonable, flexible, sensible, understanding and caring Minister. I ask him to give that gentle, insubstantial—except in its effect—assurance that the matter will be further considered when the Bill is presented to another place. If he will do so, I shall give the Bill my wholehearted support and not just my majority support with a minority of dissenting feeling.

5.30 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I share the disappointment of other right hon. and hon. Members that the Bill reaches Third Reading in exactly the same form that it received its Second Reading. It is most unfortunate that the Government have failed to make even one concession. The Minister said that he has received letters from many right hon. and hon. Members—and no doubt letters from many of his own right hon. and hon. Friends were among them. Apparently, those letters had no more impact than all the arguments made in Committee and on Report. I share the hope that the Minister will introduce improvements to the Bill when it reaches the other place.

The tragedy is that we have totally failed to persuade the Minister that the business in question is unique and has many features that distinguish it from other types of premises. It is irrelevant to say, as the Minister did, that the Bill provides the same protection as that given to other types of business tenants. The tenants of licensed premises operate in wholly different circumstances.

I shall not bore the House by recounting the catalogue of features that distinguish licensed premises. The Minister has already acknowledged one of the most obvious—that in most cases the premises serve as the tenant's home as well as his place of business. That alone is good reason for providing additional protection. Also, the tenant himself must hold a licence, apart from that granted in respect of the premises. I know of no other business in which the individual running it must hold a licence so that his customers can consume on the premises the goods that he sells.

Mr. Dixon: Does my hon. Friend agree that the individual can also lose his licence through circumstances beyond his control? For example, a person might come to his public house and cause a disturbance, and the police might then object to the publican continuing to hold his licence—the loss of which would also mean the loss of his livelihood.

Mr. Crowther: My hon. Friend is certainly correct. Also, if a licensee loses his premises because of a decision by his landlord, unlike a butcher, draper or grocer, he cannot move into new premises just down the road and open another business. That is because the whole operation is controlled by a licensing system. The licensee of a public house is more vulnerable than an ordinary shopkeeper, which is another reason why he should be given additional protection.

Another unique feature is that the person carrying on the business does not own the goodwill of it. As the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report pointed out, he is very much in the position of being an employee of the brewery. He is there to sell its products—but at the end of the day, there is nothing to cover him for goodwill. The MMC pointed out that people in that situation should be given extra protection, to strengthen their position as independent business men.

It is a question of allowing licensees to compete effectively. I thought that a Government committed to competition would be happy to accept amendments to improve the competitiveness of these small business men. Again, I hope that that argument will be taken into account. All is not yet lost, because the Bill has still to go to another place.

I took the view from the start that we would not be able to amend the Bill through a series of Divisions and that the only hope was to persuade the Minister with our arguments in the belief that he was capable of being swayed by them. We have not yet succeeded in that, but we hope for something in the next few weeks.

I emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) that our right-to-buy proposal is narrow in scope, as the Minister acknowledged in Committee. The narrowness of its scope led me to believe that the Government would accept it. It deals only with the situation in which a brewery is proposing to sell a public house to an individual or individual who is not in the brewing business. Only when the pub is going out of brewery ownership do we say that the existing tenant should have an opportunity of buying it at its market value. No one is suggesting that the brewery should lose any money in the transaction—but the man or woman already running the pub should be able to take over the premises if he or she wishes to do so. They may have to borrow the cash, but at least they will have an opportunity to invest in a business that they have been running for a long time.

A classic example of the need for a right-to-buy provision concerns a pleasant little Victorian pub in my constituency called the Butcher's Arms, which I frequent from time to time. Until a few months ago, it was owned by a company which is not primarily a brewery but which has brewing interests through an acquisition. When the tenant heard that the owners had decided to sell his pub, he asked to be allowed to make a bid for it. He offered a reasonable price, and the owners told him, "You'll need to improve your offer a little because you have a rival. If you can make your price a little higher, you'll be all right." The licensee accordingly increased his bid by £10,000 and waited for the result.

He heard the outcome not from the owners but from his rival, who walked into his premises one day and said, "I've bought your pub." That is not a very nice thing to happen to any licensee. After only a few weeks, that same pub is again on the market at a price £45,000 higher than that at which it was sold at the end of last year, which is a 50 per cent. increase. Such incidents are not helpful to the trade and certainly not helpful to a licensee trying to keep his business running while the ownership of his pub keeps changing hands.

I regret that the Minister has been unable to find a solution on compensation. He acknowledges that there is a problem, so I hope that he will find a suitable formula before the Bill goes to the Lords. He says that he still has an open mind, so I hope that he will pay particular attention to the comments of the hon. Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) in Committee.

I thought that the contribution of the hon. Member for Ilford, North was very helpful, straightforward and clear. He spoke on the basis of his long experience. At the third sitting of the Standing Committee he said:

"The only answer that I can see is for the goodwill to be valued when the tenant first takes the lease and revalued when he goes."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 25 January 1990; c. 64.]

What could be simpler than that? The Minister says that it would be difficult to write that into the legislation.

Mr. Bendall: I consulted the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, which has some knowledge of valuing. There is a problem with valuing goodwill on the way in and the way out. Its suggestion was that the multiplier on the rateable value for pub tenancies should be greater than the multiplier normally afforded.

Mr. Crowther: I am grateful for that intervention. I cannot dispute expert professional opinion, but I do not understand why the valuation of goodwill should be terribly difficult at the beginning and at the end of a tenancy, because other businesses are bought or sold on that basis. I should have thought that the use of the multiplier on the rateable value would be a less realistic method, in the sense that it would not take account of the extent to which the business has improved during the time that the tenant was in the premises. Whichever way it is done, there is a case for providing more compensation when businesses are repossessed by the landlord for management. It is a matter of justice.

I accept that there are difficulties, and I do not pretend that it is a simple matter, but, after all, Ministers are in the business of providing solutions. I should have thought that that is the Government's job in such a case. We are talking about justice, and I hope that the Minister will find a way to provide justice in this matter. If he does that, it will be a better Bill than it is at present.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North that at present the Bill falls a long way short of what is desirable. Obviously it is an advance, but not as major an advance as the Minister suggests. It falls down on a lot of matters, and we have done our best to demonstrate how the Bill could be improved. I am sorry that we have not managed to persuade the Government.

I remind the Minister that we are talking about a large number of small business men. I think hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that we should encourage small businesses in every way that we can. More protection is needed for small business men, who serve a useful purpose in the community, than is so far provided for in the Bill.

5.42 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The House will be aware that I was not selected to serve on the Standing Committee, but I have read the debates, and I want to make a few comments on a Bill which has, as hon. Members have pointed out, reached this stage unamended.

I start with the premise that the Bill was intended to improve the lot of people whose business in the licensed trade is often also their home, and that that is a good thing. I support the general thrust of the Bill. I am glad that the Government will incorporate the licensed trade into the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1954.

I am also reassured by the fact that the concern that I expressed on Second Reading about the widows' year can be properly covered by the general Landlord and Tenant Act provision. That will reassure those widows who thought that they might be threatened, particularly after the sudden death of their husbands who were tenants. I understand that they will have the statutory assurance of being able to succeed to the tenancy, irrespective of the fact that they may have entered into any other apparent agreement that would give them fewer rights. I hope that the Minister will reassure me in his winding-up speech that I have understood the matter correctly. Tenants might have signed an agreement that was short of an opting-out agreement but, on the face of it, appeared to mean that after seven, 14 or 28 days they would no longer be able to remain. They will now be overridden by the statutory provisions of the 1954 Act. If that is correct, it is a good thing, and I welcome it.

I listened to what the Minister said about the period between now and July 1992. In Committee the Under-Secretary confirmed that 90 per cent. of tenancies will fall due to be renewed in the three years between July 1989 and July 1992. Effectively, other than in a few exceptional cases, there will be a complete turnover of tenants during that period. Therefore, there will be an opportunity for all tenancies to be reviewed before the Act bites in 1992.

Mr. Redwood: The 90 per cent. figure refers to brewery-owned tenancies. The transitional provisions are such that, if the tenancy comes up for renewal prior to 1992, it will come under the security of this legislation. Tenancies that have not been renewed before 1992 will automatically come under the legislation.

Mr. Hughes: I am concerned that a substantial number of tenancies will expire under the present arrangements between the passing of the Bill and 1992 when the Bill bites and will cover them. *[Interruption.]* The Minister says no. As I understand it, the whole debate in Committee was about whether the legislation should have immediate effect or take effect in 1992. An amendment was tabled to alter 1992 to 1990 so that there would be no gap. The Ministers' argument was that it would be unfair to impose the new regime on people who had entered into a contract before the legislation was passed and therefore it was only right that the new regime to bring licensed premises under the 1954 Act should come into force after a period of time in which many of the people affected would have had the opportunity to enter new tenancy agreements. Although there will be a provision for opting-out, many present tenants whose tenancies will end are unprotected by the 1954 legislation, and they will not have full statutory protection if they enter a new agreement before 1992.

The Minister said that he will monitor carefully what happens. I am concerned that there will be a danger that in the next two years a potentially large number of brewers may want to use the opportunities that they have at present but will not have post-1992. Unless there is a speedy response to any information that comes forward, monitoring will not produce the answers in time to be of use.

Mr. Redwood: The two operative dates are July 1989 and July 1992. Between those dates, expiring tenancies come under legislation, but 10 per cent. of brewery tenancies will not have been renewed in the transitional period, and when they come up for renewal either shortly after 1992 or a long time afterwards they will

[Mr. Redwood]

automatically come under the protection of the Act, although the tenancies have not been renewed. Therefore, I do not think that matters are quite as the hon. Gentleman is saying they are.

Mr. Hughes: Could the Minister give a figure which he did not give, as far as I remember, in Committee? What percentage of current tenancies held in the whole of the licensed trade will come up for renewal between the passage of the Bill, assuming it is passed in the next few months, and July 1922? Obviously some tenancies must be at risk in that period.

Mr. Redwood: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman understands the nature of the transitional period. We estimate that 90 per cent. of brewery-owned tenancies will be protected by the transitional provisions, while the residual 10 per cent. will receive such protection automatically in July 1992. I have no figures relating to the non-brewery tenancies, as they are a much more amorphous grouping, and I understand that there is no easy way of establishing the proportion. Given that the typical brewery tenancy lasts for three years, however, the hon. Gentleman can see for himself.

Mr. Hughes: Between now and 1992, when the Act will come fully into force, developments must be monitored responsibly Clearly the most effective monitor is the National Licensed Victuallers Association. I hope that the Minister will at least undertake to ensure that if the association produces evidence of significant "exploitation" by the brewers, he will contemplate prompt legislation. Only a minor amendment would be necessary to protect tenants' rights, and Conservative as well as Opposition Members have asked the Minister for such an assurance.

Clearly, the opting-out provision will increase the NLVA's responsibility; it will be up to those who advise tenants to ensure that they are not dragooned into signing an exemption agreement with the brewery. As the Minister well knows, it is always difficult to go behind the face of agreements. It is difficult to disprove, in law, the validity of a contract that appears to have been entered into on a valid basis. Pressure is imposed behind the scenes, and a document eventually appears detailing an agreement containing an exemption clause, but the events leading up to that agreement may not bear revelation.

Because it will rarely be possible to look behind the scenes, it is vital for us to make it clear that, once the new regime comes into operation with the exemption possibility always there, the NLVA and others who advise licensees and tenants must explain that they need not agree to an exemption. The presumption in the law must be that they will be covered by that law, although if tenants wish to opt out they should be allowed to do so. In some circumstances, of course, the deal that they are offered will be acceptable, but I hope that they will be much more alert to their rights following the enactment of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and others have expressed the hope that the Minister—who has said that he retains an open mind about some aspects of the Bill—will have an opportunity to reflect further when it goes to another place, and will accept the advice from people in the business that tighter protection is required. My hon. Friends and I do not intend to oppose Third Reading; that would remove some of the protection that will be provided in due course, which would be neither in the interests of tenants nor in the general interest. Nevertheless, I hope that the Minister, and those who take charge of the Bill in the Lords, will not assume from the probable lack of opposition to its Third Reading that further improvements are not necessary. As the hon. Member for Rotherham pointed out, we are talking not only about businesses, but about homes and livelihoods: in that regard, licensed tenants are a special category, distinct from others who are protected by the 1954 Act.

5.54 pm

Mr. Dixon: I whipped the Bill through its Committee stage, and it was a good Committee stage; constructive arguments were put by hon. Members from both sides of the House. The only hon. Member who did not come up with anything constructive was the Minister. Although I was impressed by the number of adjectives used by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) to describe him, I am afraid that none of them could have come from my mouth, for I am thoroughly disappointed by his failure to accept any of our constructive suggestions.

The idea of the Committee stage, at which amendments were tabled, was to achieve a better and fairer balance, and we attempted to do the same today. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) chaired the Committee, and I have no doubt that he, too, is disappointed. We had gathered from some of the Minister's remarks in Committee that the Government would table appropriate amendments on Report.

I have received a letter from a Mr. Aitkenhead, the NLVA's north-east councillor. His observations about contracting-out have been echoed today by hon. Members of both sides of the House. Mr. Aitkenhead's first point is that some amendment to the Bill is vital. He also says that, when brewery companies sell public houses to non-brewers, the sitting tenant should be given the first option to purchase, and I agree with that as well. His third point is:

> "Brewery companies should not take houses back for management without agreeing satisfactory terms with the sitting tenant".

The Minister implied that compensation would be considered, and I hope that an amendment will be tabled in another place, although it may not be entirely acceptable to us.

Fourthly, Mr. Aitkenhead suggested that,

> "In the event of the death of the tenant, the interests of the surviving spouse"

should be protected. The Minister has said that the existing legislation provides some protection. Unfortunately, however, licensed tenants do not accept that the protection is there. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) spoke of the fundamental need for the Bill to provide for it. People should not have to refer back to the *Hansard* report of a debate on 26 February to find out what the Minister said.

In Committee, it was argued that a certain amount of good will was necessary if tenants were to build up a business for the breweries. I hope that the Minister will show some good will himself, and will table amendments in the other place to deal with some of the useful suggestions that have been made today and in Committee.

5.58 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I apologise for speaking at such a late stage. As I have a considerable interest in the licensed trade, I came into the Chamber to hear what was being said, and found myself provoked to make a short speech.

I begin by declaring an interest as a licensed trade tenant. I am fortunate enough to have a lease rather than a short-term tenancy. Therefore, I am in a slightly different category from most of the licensees who are members of the National Licensed Victuallers Association, which I advised for some years. The association is now advised admirably by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther). He acts as adviser to the association rather than as its spokesman. We have to bear in mind Burke's definition. The hon. Gentleman does not speak on the association's behalf in this place, but gives it advice and then makes his own judgment about which line to take.

The debate on the licensed trade and its tenancy arrangements are fundamental to the trade. A licensee is a vulnerable tenant. Should he, for any reason, lose his tenancy, he loses his business and his home. He dispenses alcohol to the public and, therefore, has to exercise with great care a considerable degree of responsibility. There has been discussion for many years about whether licensees should be subject to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 or whether statutory backing ought to be given to the code of practice that was drawn up by the Brewers Society. Paragraph 9 of the code of practice would provide them with some security. I am pleased that the Government have seen fit to go down the former track.

A number of hon. Members have referred to compensation for goodwill, a matter which causes me concern. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) answered that question adequately. If, for reasons beyond his control, a licensee is forced to relinquish his tenancy, he must be recompensed for the important element of goodwill. It has been suggested that the Minister will think again about the matter and that when the Bill is considered in another place their Lordships may also consider that the Bill needs to be amended.

I draw the attention of the House to earlier precedents. The other place has been kind to the licensed trade. Hon. Members will recall that when the Licensing Act 1988 was considered in the other place, amendments were tabled on opening hours on Sundays. They were carried, not just because of the force of the arguments in favour of those opening hours but because the Minister was asleep when the House divided. I shall not mention him by name, but he will be known to hon. Members.

I hope that the sense that has been shown by the other place regarding the licensed trade and the precedents that have been set by earlier legislation will be repeated. Compensation is important to the trade. I hope that that question will be addressed before this welcome measure reaches the statute book.

6.2 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) referred to four points that had been raised by the National Licensed Victuallers Association. They have also been raised by local licensed victualler associations. I have been contacted both by the NLVA and the Chesterfield and district body. I have also met the Clay Cross licensed victuallers, who made the same points.

The LVAs believe that contracting-out should not be a condition of granting a new tenancy; that publicans should have the first option to purchase from the brewery; that brewery companies should not take back houses for management without taking into account the goodwill of the business; and that a spouse's rights should be protected. Tenants are in a vulnerable position because of the nature of the business. I intend to refer to additional problems that tenants face.

The enterprise culture has resulted in changes to the licensed trade and the control of public houses. There have been dramatic changes to the terms on which licensees are granted tenancies. Pressure has also been exerted on those who already have tenancies, even when the tenant is doing quite well and is popular in the community. The services that tenants provide are not entirely commercial. Pubs provide a meeting point where people can congregate. It is a form of working-class culture which draws people together. That cannot readily and easily be quantified in terms of the cash element that seems to dominate all decisions.

The changes to opening hours have led to problems for licensed victuallers. Brewers have told tenants when they should open. However, tenants wanted greater flexibility so that they could control opening hours. The result is that their families and the few people whom they employ are being exploited.

A number of tenants will be affected by the poll tax. As they are obliged to live on the licensed premises, those are said to be their sole or main place of residence. That is part of the contract. However, a number of them may have a second home close by. It is a peculiar second home; most people do not have a second home that is only two or three streets away. Tenants make use of their second home and may want to move to it when they retire. It cannot readily be let. However, the community charge provisions mean that poll tax has to be paid both on a three-bedroomed house—the modest accommodation that some tenants may have—and on the licensed premises. Some tenants need to have a second home because of the impermanent nature of the tenancy. It provides a safeguard for them if things go wrong.

Mr. Crowther: My hon. Friend has made an important point. Is he aware that at least one local authority has reached the decision, very sensibly in my view, that it is appropriate to levy the poll tax only on the public house and to make no levy in respect of the second home when a tenant is obliged, by the terms of his tenancy or licence, to reside in the public house? I hope that other local authorities will take that sensible decision.

Mr. Barnes: That is a valuable suggestion. However, local authorities have to ensure that it does not appear to others that a special group has been exempted. The Government ought to take on board my hon. Friend's point. There is still time for them to write into the Bill a provision that would require all local authorities to follow that course. The Government must ensure that special privileges are not thought to have been granted to one particular group. My hon. Friend's suggestion would allow local authorities to get round that problem.

[Mr. Barnes]

Many licensed victuallers are faced with problems, just because of the kind of community that they serve. At Clay Cross the growing problem of indebtedness in the local community means that public houses are used more at the weekend and are only sparsely attended in the rest of the week. Care should be taken in developing areas that suffer relative deprivation to retain local provisions. A clean sweep, through a commercial approach, might devastate the viability of existing provisions that might be required as part of a growing community. I hope that the special concerns and difficulties encountered by tenants within such communities will be taken into account in the later stages of the Bill.

6.10 pm

Dr. Moonie: My hon. Friends and I have considered carefully whether to vote against the Third Reading. We are particularly disappointed by the Government's failure to recognise the cogency of our amendments on contracting-out. The Minister listened politely to everything that we and many Conservative Members said, but he did not accept any of our amendments. That is sad, because our motive throughout has been to improve a piece of legislation with which we agree in principle.

I still believe that the Bill has several flaws. However, my disappointment is tempered by the awareness that it will now proceed to another place, where, we hope, older and probably wiser heads than the Minister's will see the merit of at least some of our proposals. Therefore, after due consideration, I have decided to ask my hon. Friends not to vote against the Bill, but to await the outcome of that debate.

6.11 pm

Mr. Redwood: I was expecting more from the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). I thought that he might have some new arguments that would shed light on our debate. What a disappointment it was that there was nothing new in his final speech.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) graced the House with a rather more extensive resumé of some very old arguments that we heard in Committee and one or two new ones. The first was the idea that there was the right to buy for any employee in a Government-owned business. Unfortunately, there is no such right to buy, and nor will there be an intention to provide one by Act of Parliament. There are circumstances, such as those of the National Freight Corporation, where it makes sense for the vendor to sell to the employees because it was a good package and was a way of extending the Government's general policy of more employee ownership which has been reflected in a number of tax changes and other measures. However, there is no right in law to buy any business premises or business from its owners, and to insert one into the law for one particular category of business tenant and not the rest would be extremely skewed legislation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do his homework a little better on the National Freight Corporation which, as he rightly hinted, was a great success of the Government's policies which Conservative Members welcomed.

The hon. Gentleman then revisited the issue of widows' rights and said that the problem of the protection offered by landlord and tenant legislation was that it did not necessarily mean that the spouse would inherit those rights, as that would require the nomination of the tenant before he dies of who takes over the estate. That is a perfectly good security as there may be circumstances in which, for example, the widow did not wish to take over the responsibilities of running the business and the tenant had decided that it made sense to pass the tenancy to the son who would make sensible provision for his mother while taking over the obligations of the tenancy.

Nor would the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that reduces the protection on offer to the widow cover other relationships within the family—for example, if the publican had a stable relationship with a lady but had not got around to marrying her. He might want to nominate her, and that would not be possible under the hon. Gentleman's amendment.

The legislation presents more appropriate arrangements which allow the tenant to nominate before his death who will inherit that part of his estate. We are creating an important property right which he will pass on to the person of his choice. I cannot accept that it is worthwhile having less protection built into the Bill because of that bogus point.

Mr. Simon Hughes: If there is no clear succession, no disputed will, no clear will or no will, is there any way in which an existing spouse, who is the obvious successor and wants to continue running the business, will be protected or will things remain as uncertain for her under those circumstances?

Mr. Redwood: I use this opportunity to urge all people who will be passing on that property right to note that they should make sensible arrangements to protect the interests of their spouse. The hon. Gentleman is right that if there is confusion over the estate things will be more difficult. It is not asking very much to say that people should make decent provision in good time for their wives or for other members of their family whom they wish to inherit that right, and it would be common prudence to do so.

I made my position on compensation clear in my response to an earlier debate.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North spoke about Scotland. He ignored the fact that Scotland has a different brewing and tenancy market from that south of the border. In Scotland, on the latest figures I have available, only 18 per cent. of pubs are brewer-owned, compared with 69 per cent. in England. There is such a big difference because there is a much bigger free trade in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman also recognises that the legislation takes the form of an amendment to an existing piece of legislation to drop an exemption that we consider is no longer right or appropriate. There would be no means by which we could effect the same for Scotland as that would require entirely different legislation that would have to consider the balance of business tenancies across the Scottish economy, because Scotland does not have legislation equivalent to that for England and Wales. There is a different settlement for Scottish regions and that would require looking at afresh. It would be a major task to walk over that ground affecting all business tenancies.

We have had a reprise of the previous debate about the nature of contracting-out. I can only repeat the assurances and clarification that I gave then about the procedures that will be followed and the reasons why it was thought to be a good thing when it was introduced in 1969 by a Labour Administration and why we feel that it remains true today for business tenancies in general and for licensed tenancies in particular.

I am delighted that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) agrees that the Bill represents a step in the right direction for tenants' rights. I also agree with him that, contrary to the suggestion of Opposition Members, there has been no conspiracy. The balance of rights for tenants has not been reached because the brewers have dictated the terms to the Government. It is the result of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's inquiry and the Government's view that there needs to be improved protection for tenants and that this was the most straightforward and simple way of bringing forward measures to provide protection as quickly as possible. I am grateful that the Committee did not unduly detain the Bill, because it was an essential part of the package that we get the legislation through in good time so that protection can begin to bite as soon as the Bill receives Royal Assent.

The Government have responded to the lobby of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther). My hon. Friends, the National Licensed Victuallers Association and I quite agree that tenants need protection quickly and that is why it is going ahead on time.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton—I mean my hon. and learned Friend; how could I be so churlish after what he said about me—asked about goodwill. I can only repeat what I said earlier about the nature of goodwill and the monitoring that the Government and the Office of Fair Trading will undertake in connection with the general legislation for all business tenancies, and the detailed package of proposals affecting the brewing industry, which was regarded as a balanced package extending rights and competition in the industry in the way specified.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) welcomed the good news on widows. I wish that Labour Members would understand that our proposal deals with the problem better than amendment No. 3 would have. I hope that I have clarified for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey how tenancies will be subject to protection over a phased time period, for which the starting date must be July 1989 because that was when the policy was announced. The terminal date has been judged to be July 1992 because we do not wish the legislation to be retrospective. There must be a cut-off point by which all the tenancies are covered, and July 1992 was our balanced judgment of how to overcome the twin pulls of not wishing to disrupt agreements retrospectively but wishing to have all the protection in place for all tenancies by the summer of 1992, by when the other measures will have come into full effect. We tried to phase the MMC conclusions to ensure advancing tenancy protection at the same time as a growing relaxation of the ties, which have caused other changes.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey asked about the turnover of brewery tenancies, which I clarified in an intervention. I repeat that we are interested in monitoring the success of the policy in the ways that I have described.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) asked about compensation, which I covered in a previous statement. I hope that my noble Friend the Minister will not be asleep when these measures are going through the other place. I have been attentive to the debate because these are serious matters which require the full-time attention of the Minister on duty.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire North-East (Mr. Barnes) dealt with issues far removed from the Bill, with his interest in the community charge and the redevelopment of bad areas. I dealt with the hon. Gentleman's general remarks on the four points made by the NLVA before he arrived.

The Bill makes a welcome improvement to tenants' rights. That improvement was sought by all hon. Members, and I strongly recommend that they give the Bill a Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Industrial Training

6.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I beg to move,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th February, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following motion:

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th February, be approved.

Mr. Nicholls: The debate takes place because any industrial training levy order which involves a levy exceeding 1 per cent. of an employer's payroll must receive parliamentary approval under the Industrial Training Act 1982. For the engineering board, one part of the levy proposals—that covering site employees in the engineering construction sector—establishes a levy rate of 1·5 per cent. Similarly, the construction board proposals, covering labour-only subcontractors, establish a levy rate of 2 per cent.

Hon. Members will not need reminding that both those sectors are vital to the country's economy. The engineering industry employs nearly 2 million people in 21,600 firms. Its activities are wide ranging, including mechanical engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, vehicle and aircraft manufacture and engineering construction.

The construction industry is almost as large and employs about 1·8 million people, covering activities such as building, civil engineering, electrical contracting, heating and ventilating and plumbing.

The engineering levy proposals are in two parts. The first applies to engineering manufacture, which comprises the majority of the industry, and the second applies to the engineering construction industry, which employs approximately 40,000 workers. I will briefly outline the proposals in both sectors.

For engineering manufacturing establishments, the board proposes a total levy of 1 per cent. of an employer's payroll, 0·07 per cent. of which will be non-exemptible. Those rates are the same as last year. The bulk of the levy is therefore exemptible. Employers who train satisfactorily will be given credit for that and will not be required to pay the maximum levy to the board. In addition, firms employing 40 workers or fewer will be excluded totally from paying levy. Almost 70 per cent. of firms will therefore be excluded from levy because of their size.

In the engineering construction sector, for off-site employees establishments with up to 30 employees will be excluded from the levy. That again would mean that almost 70 per cent. of establishments would not pay levy. Establishments with more than 30 employees will be levied at 1 per cent. of payroll. The non-exemptible element of the levy will be 0·15 per cent. Those rates are also the same as those approved last year.

For site employees, the levy has been increased by 0·38 per cent. to 1·5 per cent. of payroll in response to growing skill shortages in this part of the sector. No levy is payable on the first £50,000 of payroll, which will exclude about 14 per cent. of establishments.

The raising of a non-exemptible levy in excess of 0·2 per cent. in the on-site sector means that under the Industrial Training Act the board must demonstrate that there is consensus in the industry for the proposals.

Employer organisations representing 60 per cent. of leviable establishments and about 86 per cent. of the work force have confirmed their agreement to the proposals, thus satisfying the conditions of the Act.

The engineering industry training board anticipates that the levy proposals I have described will raise some £22 million. It will apply to those firms what fall within the scope of the board between the date the order comes into force and 31 August 1990.

The construction levy proposals are in the same format and at the same rates as those approved by the House last year.

The board estimates that the levy will raise £66·4 million and it is proposed in three parts. First, there will be a per capita levy on directly employed construction workers in the main industry. The rates will vary according to the type of person being trained and will reflect the training costs for each occupation. The rates are subject to an overall limit of 1 per cent. of payroll.

Secondly, the board proposes to retain the 2 per cent. levy on payments made to labour-only subcontractors. This rate has not changed since 1981 and reflects the board's judgment that subcontractors undertake too little training, relying instead on obtaining skilled manpower trained by other employers.

Companies covered by those two parts of the levy with payrolls of £15,000 or less are excluded from the payment of levy. Approximately 29 per cent. of firms are excluded by this provision.

The third part is the levy for the brick manufacturing industry. The board proposed a rate of 0·05 per cent. of payroll, with firms having a payroll of £100,000 or less being excluded.

As with engineering, the construction board is required to demonstrate that there is consensus within the industry for the proposals because the levy exceeds 0·2 per cent. of payroll without an exemption scheme. Support has been gained from employers' organisations representing 60 per cent. of employers liable to pay the levy and from 82 per cent. of employers who pay more than half of the total levy.

Turning to the future, in line with recommendations in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", the EITB has put forward proposals for an independent training organisation representing engineering manufacture and for the retention of statutory arrangements for engineering construction. These proposals were approved in November 1989.

Currently the board is working on the development of a plan and timetable for the management of this transition and it is anticipated that an independent engineering training authority, covering engineering manufacturing, will be fully operational by July 1991.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my hon. Friend assure the House that not only is great care being taken to ensure that the plans for training meet the requirements of the national training qualifications council but that they will be recognised in Europe?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend is entirely right. Underpinning the arrangements will be the

proposition, on which I believe there is a fair amount of consensus, that it is up to employers to train in their sectors because they feel the need of skilled people and because they know how to meet those shortages. I entirely accept what my hon. Friend said about the need to ensure that the standards and qualifications are recognised in Europe.

Our plan means that the levy proposed, for collection in 1990-91, will be the last to be raised by the engineering manufacturing sector.

For engineering construction, it is anticipated that the levy and grant arrangements will secure an adequate supply of skilled workers by rewarding those employers who train. It is expected that the exemption arrangements for this sector's off-site establishments will be replaced by a voluntary code of practice.

In the construction industry, the Government accept that, because of the particular employment patterns—a highly mobile work force and heavy reliance on labour-only subcontracting—statutory arrangements will need to continue, with a thorough review in 1992. In the meantime, a number of sectors in the construction industry training board—principally, electrical contracting, plumbing, heating and ventilating—are developing independent arrangements.

The proposals have received unanimous approval from the respective boards and will assist in sustaining their worthwhile activities within their industries. I commend them to the House.

6.30 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): The Minister's speech had a familiar ring, but I am grateful for the fact that he opened up the debate at the end of his speech by talking about the Government's new ideas for voluntarism within the training boards structure in the years ahead.

The Opposition support the orders. We wish to congratulate the construction industry training board and the engineering industry training board on their work and their commitment to tackle the emerging skills crisis. Although we applaud their past work, the future is ominous. The Government have said that they will let the two boards continue for three years, but the Opposition have no doubt that, after this thorough-going review, they will again be put on a voluntary basis. We believe from our perspective of the skills crisis that that would not be a good idea for the industries or the nation.

Our anxiety is heightened by the fact that, despite the Government's rhetoric over the past decade, they have been involved in a systematic assault on the training infrastructure. The Manpower Services Commission was stripped of its responsibilities and was changed into the Training Commission, which has been emasculated over the past few months. The Skills Training Agency is about to be privatised, again with no real regard for the nation's training needs but again doing much to satisfy the Government's aim to move towards the market model. We have also seen the final attempt to dismantle the training boards structure. In 1981, in a document entitled "Framework for the Future", the Government said that 16 of the 23 training boards should go out of existence. This was followed by a recent decision to axe another five and the decision that two should continue on a statutory basis, with a review promised at the end of three years.

The Government's record does not reinforce our confidence that training is safe in their hands. They have not tackled the skills crisis and, even more alarming, they have assaulted what could have been the basis of a training structure in the 1990s.

I should like to dwell on the Government's attempt to have voluntarism or the market model. Many people regard voluntarism as a polite description of the crude market mechanism which is being introduced into the delivery of training. On 8 November 1989, the former Secretary of State for Employment—the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler)—said:

"The amendments, which we moved in another place, are designed to enable us to change statutory industrial training boards to voluntary employer-led bodies or to employer-led boards. The change is part of the changes to the existing framework necessary to meet the challenges of the next decade."

In an extraordinary paragraph, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"In future, training must help business succeed, become the responsibility of employers, provide standards that are set by industry, allow adults and young people to receive qualifications".

Is that not what the training boards and every training company have been doing for the past decade? Is it not nonsense to suggest that they must now contribute to business success? What has training been about? Is not training about success, profitability, competitiveness and trying to give us an edge, whether in a world market or a European market? The right hon. Gentleman was trying to establish the simple point that, regardless of the crisis of the skills shortage in this country or in the world market, the Government would go down a market road on training. Later, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"That approach is far preferable to one of regulation and compulsion."—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1989; Vol. 159, c.1121-22.]

I have a simple question for the Government: what evidence sustains the Government through onslaught after onslaught by the Opposition, industrialists and our European competitors and suggests that, by changing the statutory nature of these boards to one of voluntarism, all our training problems will disappear? Is the evidence based in this country? If so, I hope that the Minister will refer to it in his response. Is it based on the experience in Europe? It cannot be, because people there are walking in a different direction from the Government.

We see no sense in leaving industrial training entirely to the market. Of course, employers must play an active leading role, but they have not walked away from their responsibilities, as the Government are doing. Is it much more to do with what emanates from No. 10 Downing street and the fact that everything must pay homage to the market model? The Government are in danger of isolating themselves from mainstream opinion on training, but, more important, they are in danger of turning their back on the emerging skills crisis, which has enormous implications for the challenges of 1992 and for our ability to compete in a world in which other countries invest in development and innovation, linked to training in a way about which either the Government have no conception or, if they have, it is not reflected in their actions.

As if that were not bad enough, on 9 November, in a press notice issued by the Department of Employment, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield posed the real threat to the two remaining boards. He said:

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

"In two sectors I have accepted the strong arguments of employers that statutory arrangements should continue for the time being, but this does not shape our belief that a voluntary approach offers a better long-term solution to meeting industries' own training needs."

At the end of that paragraph, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"I am minded to think that they, too, should be moved to an entirely voluntary basis."

That is what he said, after accepting the three-year continuation of the boards' lives and the review which is to take place.

The Government have made up their mind. The two boards are living on borrowed time. We may be one, two or three years from having the 23 training boards completely removed from the training scene, to be replaced by what the Government call voluntarism. In 1987, the Varlaam report, prepared by the Institute of Manpower Studies, stated that the non-statutory training organisations that the Government had set up were not working. No one was surprised. In an editorial on 4 March 1988, the *Financial Times* stated:

"One immediate area where reform is needed is the sectoral Non-Statutory Training Organisations (NSTOs), which were established by employers after the abolition of most statutory Industrial Training Boards . . . After six years, the first comprehensive survey of the 102 NSTOs found that half, covering about 2·5 million employees, were 'not effective'."

The main conclusion to emerge from the report was that those organisations needed more Government support. Is that not a curious paradox? Those bodies were set up in the voluntary sector supposedly to undertake the work of the statutory boards, but after a few years in operation the main conclusion of the study was that they needed more Government help.

Mr. Rowe: Is it not a promising feature of the training scene that in a number of companies people are putting in their own time and effort to acquire qualifications that will enable them to earn substantially higher wages? But is it not also the case that in many industries the gap between those who have acquired higher qualifications and those who have not is much too small and that the reason for that is that the trade unions have traditionally pressed for a flattening of the salaries and wages structure? Would it not be a good idea to change that?

Mr. McLeish: The hon. Gentleman makes some interesting points. I accept that one of the key issues that we face in Britain is not only to increase the volume of skills in every sector but to improve the quality.

My main criticism of the Government is that, although they claim to seek voluntarism, there is nothing in legislation to encourage the individual. To engage the nation in tackling the skills crisis, we need not only the participation of employers but firm leadership from the Government. That combination is replicated in every country in Europe, in the far east and by two of our major competitors—Japan and America. That is the central point that I am trying to stress.

What are our other main criticisms of the Government? First, they seem to oppose any statutory provision. After all, that goes against the grain of their political prejudice, which is well documented.

Secondly, they are against the concept of a levy because they are mindful of what they regard as bureaucracy and because they think that employers should be left to do what they wish, regardless of whether the effect on economic performance is good or bad. That cannot be right.

Thirdly, the Government have spent the past 10 years seeking confrontation over the delivery of training. Why is it that, even on the newly constituted boards in the engineering and construction industries, we must again have a majority of employers? I do not particularly mind a majority of employers, but why have the Government gone out of their way to isolate and marginalise the providers of training, the educationists and the trade unionists? In Europe, the social partnership concept brings together employers and trade unions in a constructive relationship. Yet this Government do not seek partnership even though it is the model used by all our European competitors. Instead, they seek to build in confrontation, which is a luxury that we cannot afford. We cannot measure up to the challenges that we face without partnership, consensus and a degree of unanimity concerning our national objectives.

Let me deal specifically with engineering. Nowhere is our skills crisis more evident than in engineering. We read that, in the last quarter of 1989, we had a 20 per cent. cut in manufacturing investment, a £20 billion trade deficit, 20 per cent. skills shortages being reported repeatedly by the CBI and an interest rate of 15 per cent. We read that 52 per cent. of employees receive no training and 20 per cent. of employers provide no training. What does the Government's voluntarism do to tackle the problems in the engineering sector? If there is a way out of the economic crisis that Britain faces in the 1990s, it is surely to invest in manufacturing and provide it with the best skill training base that we can offer through a partnership between employers and employees. But it seems that the Government simply do not care.

What about small businesses? In a debate a few weeks ago we pointed to the fact that nearly 6 million people are either self-employed or in small businesses. In the newly constituted boards, there is to be a larger exemption and that gives rise to concern about small businesses. Small businesses need assistance because they make an enormous contribution to growth and employment, but some of them cannot afford the finance—especially given the other national problems that I have outlined—to invest in training. What are the Government doing to encourage small businesses and to involve them in a partnership to ensure that their product development, production processes and productivity improve?

The Opposition support the orders, but we believe that their success will be governed by the circumstances in which they are implemented over the next two to three years. The Government have made great play of the improvements in productivity that have taken place in the past decade. It does not take an economic wizard to realise that, if one sheds 2 million to 3 million employees from manufacturing industry, productivity will increase and unit costs are likely to fall. But improvements in unit costs and productivity are starting to level off and the reason is simple: we have shed manpower without investing in the two sectors in which our competitors do well—technology and capital equipment and training. We simply cannot continue to marginalise those who wish to contribute to training. We must now take seriously the fact that we have a major skills crisis. We need partnership, and we cannot have the Government walking away from the problem and calling their neglect a strategy.

6.45 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): This is one of those rare occasions on which it is possible to support the Government but also to speak critically, as the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) has shown. It also affords us the opportunity to examine not merely the question of training but the creation of opportunities for young people to earn a living later in life.

I am delighted that so much of this debate has been about Europe. I have discovered that what happens in Europe is very different from what happens in Britain. In Europe, young people can still begin apprenticeships at 13, 14 and 15, which is not possible in our somewhat hidebound education system. It is time the Government realised that if we are to meet the skill shortages of the future and get young people to enter craft industries we must look again at the division that we have created between education and training. That division does not arise on the continent, and if we are to be on all fours with our competitors on the continent we must examine why they succeed and we fail. One of the reasons is that they do not entertain the nonsensical idea that one must have comprehensive education until 16 and only then begin a craft apprenticeship.

The Europeans stream youngsters at a much earlier age. They give them the educational classification most suited to their needs, and that includes apprenticeship training. In France, youngsters can begin at 13 or 14. We do not regard the French as educational Philistines—on the contrary, we regard them as rather forward-thinking. Youngsters can do a two-year pre-vocational training from 13 to 15 and can then train for their craft at a training centre for apprentices from 15 to 18 years of age. We should be examining that way forward rather than continuing with our rather nonsensical training boards.

I do not suppose that I am the only hon. Member to have served on one of the boards. I do not suppose that I am the only hon. Member to have been responsible for apprentice training. I do not suppose that I am the only hon. Member who has examined youngsters in craft skills. I also spent a great deal of my time in local government dealing with education at all levels. I could see the divide then, and it has been there for a long time—at least for the 28 years to which I refer.

As chairman of an apprentice training scheme, it was my responsibility to sign indentures at the beginning and at the end of training courses. The contribution made by trade unions in that context was nil and employers were not very clever either. The result was that any youngster who lived long enough had his certificate signed; it had nothing to do with whether he had passed an examination or created a piece of work. On the continent one still has to prove that the qualifications have been attained and that one can do the work. I do not believe that the training boards represent the best method of ensuring that—now or in the future. Nor can we leave training entirely to those in industry who are responsible for it today.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Fife, Central. In the past decade training has become a growth industry. My professional body, the Institute of Personnel Management, established its own institute of training in the past two or three years. Now there are many trainers doing much training, but those worthy people often do not get their hands on the raw material that they have to train until it is too late.

We should have a debate on the relationship between education and training. An education Minister should be present when we debate training and vice versa. We should examine what is happening in Europe, Japan and America. We should not be hidebound and say that we cannot reduce the school leaving age. No one is asking us to reduce it overall. Nor is that how it works on the continent. Youngsters in Italy, France, Germany and Holland are under strict controls when they begin their craft training and apprenticeships. They train in all sorts of skills—agriculture, catering and tourism as well as the furniture trade with which I was concerned. From 1992 our furniture trade will be trying to compete with its European competitors although it has a skills training shortage while they have not.

It is all very well to pass these orders and to collect the levy. I used to do that. We spent a great deal of time collecting money and paying it out. We were concerned not so much with training as with the administration of the scheme. That is why I was glad to see the back of the training boards, and I would vote for their abolition again.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider what happens on the continent. Employers are excused from national insurance contributions for apprentices. They are not levied or paid, so employers are encouraged to take on apprentices. There is no time in this short debate to develop the argument fully, but I hope that I have sown enough seeds in my hon. Friend's mind for him to take my suggestion away and to come back to the House with a debate on education and training in the light of 1992 and what is happening in the rest of Europe.

6.52 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The questions arising from the debate will not lead any of us to oppose the orders. Nevertheless, I did not hear the Minister explain how the regulations will be governed in the three-year period that the Secretary of State announced before the completion of the review. One order expires in March and the other later this year. It would be interesting to know whether the Minister anticipates, as I do, further orders thereafter.

According to the Government's figures, in the past three years two thirds of all employees received no training. I agree with the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) that, unless we give far more serious consideration to our training needs and act on the conclusions which show how inadequate training is, we shall not have an economy adequate for the next century, let alone 1992.

The construction industry training board and the engineering industry training board were singled out for continuation. The Government regard them as having a particular contribution to make to their respective industries, as evidenced by the employers who told them so. The construction industry training board ensured good training in safety practices. The Minister will be aware that safety matters give rise to widespread anxiety. We must ensure that there is adequate training to the best and highest standards of safety practice, so that we continue to reduce the number of fatalities. Sadly, for many years we have had too many of them.

Part of the general plan outlined by the former Secretary of State in his statement in November included increasing remission for small firms from contributing to

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

the levy. Given the growth in the number of people working for small firms, we should not exempt small firms per se from the levy. Such an exemption, together with the exemption from the obligation to apply as high training standards as large firms, would exclude many people from the possibility of training.

The Government have identified the other part of the agenda, not the hidden or voluntary part—that we should give incentives to those who provide the best training. My colleagues and I support the idea of remitting tax for good training. If people produce evidence to show that they have trained well and we provide a tax incentive, that would encompass good training practice across all sectors, not just engineering and construction, and not just large firms. That would encourage people to train.

After the review I hope that the Government will resolve to continue to ensure that industries such as engineering and construction have the best possible training structures in place. Nothing should be done to undermine the good practice, good standards and good achievements of those boards in the past. We need to preserve the highest standards. It would be a great sadness if, because of the dogmatic argument about getting rid of anything that is on a statutory basis, we were to get rid of two bodies that had proved their worth. I hope that the two boards realise that there is general support for them in Parliament and we hope that they will do an ever-improving job, whatever the size of firm.

6.56 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Time is very short, so I shall be brief.

I understand that the construction industry training board is to be reprieved and I am sure that we are all thankful for that. The Minister announced that the engineering industry training board is to be axed. I fear that that is likely to prove to be a mistake. We will rely on employer voluntarism when it was due to the failure of such a policy that the industrial training boards were set up.

There is to be a successor organisation to the engineering industry training board. Are all the activities of the board to be transferred? If not, what will happen to the activities not transferred? What will happen to the board's assets? Are they all to be transferred? If not, what is to happen to them? Who appointed the first governing council of the successor body, or who made the recommendations to the Minister? Why was not even one educationist put on the governing council of the new body? Can the Minister explain the relationship with the training and enterprise councils? Are the non-statutory industry training organisations to set the standards that the TECs will implement?

I see the Minister looking at the clock. I shall take only 60 seconds more. I, too, read the Varlaam report. It states that many voluntary bodies are not effective and that if the Government wish the standard setting issue to be in the forefront of non-statutory training organisations' activities, a great deal more additional support will be necessary. Will that necessary support be forthcoming?

6.58 pm

Mr. Nicholls: Detailed points have been made in this short but useful debate and, clearly, I shall have to write to hon. Members to do justice to their speeches.

I assure the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) that I never doubted his commitment to training. Some of his implications about his party's support for training, however, rang hollow. He asks for proof that when the industrial training boards move into the voluntary sector they will be a success. If he considers the present industrial training board system, he must conclude that after 25 years they cannot be said to have been an overwhelming success. It is only right after 25 years that the Government should look at the situation and see how it can be improved. Bearing in mind his personal commitment, it is a bit rich to hear from him that a party which initially took a sceptical view of youth training and vigorously opposed employment training at its outset is in favour of training. However, we may be able to deal with that another day.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th February, be approved—*[Mr. Nicholls.]*

Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill
(By Order)

7 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill, as amended, be now considered.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

7.1 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): This Bill has been debated for some time and it was the subject of a carry-over motion at the end of the last Session of Parliament. The Committee discussed and debated it at great length. I pay tribute to the members of the Committee—led by its Chairman, the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale)—for their diligent work. I attended the Committee on several occasions and enjoyed its work. It investigated at great length the criticisms and petitions presented by members of the public and by organisations with issues to raise with the promoters of the Bill.

The Bill has now been amended, so there is little more for me to say other than that the promoters would like progress to be made because they fervently believe that it is in the best interests of the people of Birmingham. It has received the overwhelming support of the elected representatives of Birmingham and of the majority of hon. Members. It is part of Birmingham's resuscitation and will provide it with a future that will acknowledge its growing importance as an industrial, commercial, financial and tourist centre of the United Kingdom.

7.4 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I regret that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) cannot be present tonight. This will be the first occasion on which he has not participated in these debates. He is in hospital, and I know that all hon. Members will join me in sincerely wishing him every good health. We hope that everything is all right and that he will be back with us soon. He is not responsible for choosing the dates for the consideration of Bills, but I know that he is with us in spirit. I can almost hear him making interjections as we make our points.

This is the first example of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) supporting Birmingham city council. Usually he misses no opportunity to denigrate and abuse it. He has ably presented the Bill to the House, and even though it is his first example of supporting the council, it so happens that on this occasion I do not agree with him.

I do not support the Bill. This is our first opportunity seriously to examine it. Because of our procedures, every Birmingham hon. Member has been prevented from becoming involved in and studying the details of the operation of the Birmingham City Council Act 1985, and the effect that the Bill will have on it. There have been two brief debates—two and a half hours on Second Reading last April, which was a general debate, and a similar debate on the carry-over motion. The detail of the Bill was scrutinised by four hon. Members who, by the rules of the House, could have nothing to do with Birmingham. That point is not always appreciated by our constituents. Birmingham Members, who allegedly know more about Birmingham—and that is true—than any other hon. Member, have not yet been able to examine the detail of the Bill. It is that part of the procedure that we begin this evening.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I am perplexed by what the hon. Gentleman has said about my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who properly supports a Bill that the Labour-controlled Birmingham city council thinks is in Birmingham's best interest. The hon. Gentleman criticises my hon. Friend because he is supporting one of the few Bills that the Labour-controlled Birmingham city council supports. My hon. Friend, like myself—and I have served for 23 years on the city council—and like my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) and others of my hon. Friends support what is good for Birmingham. Why should my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield be praised because he has ably presented the Bill but denigrated because he supports something that even the Labour party thinks is for the good of Birmingham? We are all rather perplexed about where we stand. Do we have to criticise the council because it is Labour controlled?

Mr. Rooker: Far from it. The hon. Gentleman misses the point. This is not a party political matter.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It has become one.

Mr. Rooker: It has not become a party political matter. The hon. Gentleman fails to appreciate that it was carried by a majority on the city council on a free vote. It may or may not be carried in this House on a free vote. There is no party Whip to decide on the merits or demerits of any part of the Bill. My hon. Friends take differing views—as do Conservative Members—on the merits or demerits of the Bill. I do not wish to make this into a party political matter, either in the House or on the city council. Perhaps I should not have said what I did about the hon. Member for Northfield, who is the promoters' spokesperson—in the same way that he was the poll tax Minister's bagman in Committee a couple of years ago. He has presented the Bill and carried it through its stages, but, like me, he has not been able to participate in the detailed examination of it because he is a Birmingham Member.

I wish to discuss the Bill that has come from Committee. I shall make only general remarks as I can make detailed remarks when we discuss the amendments.

I had a major surprise when I read the current, amended Bill and compared it with the Bill presented on Second Reading. It is not the same Bill. After being scrutinised by the Committee, and having listened to all the evidence, I can say that there is nothing in the Bill that will toughen up and make work the supposed financial safeguards of the 1985 Act. That is a major omission by the Committee, which was set up to examine the Bill. The Committee may not have seen it as its remit—I see it as mine, as do my hon. Friends—to examine the finances of the road race.

I oppose the Bill because it does nothing about finances, and so effectively it opens up a bottomless financial pit for poll tax payers in Birmingham. That is very important. Finances are the key reason that the House exists with the powers that it does as control of finances can mean the control of policy.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with great care.

[Dame Jill Knight]

I was concerned to hear him say that the Bill represents a bottomless pit for our ratepayers on top of the problems with the community charge. Does he feel that the city council will not be able to be careful about expenditure on the road race? What makes him so worried in this regard?

Mr. Rooker: I am worried because of the evidence provided by the first three years' accounts—we do not have the accounts for the fourth year. I do not believe that the council will take care and the evidence is in the accounts, as published. Those accounts, in tandem with the debates in the House in 1985, are the reason for my concern.

The Bill refers to the possibility of holding a grand prix. Birmingham, however, runs not a grand prix road race, but a super prix. No one else runs such a race and the idea was to hold a motor race around the streets which was not a grand prix, but which involved fairly fast cars that made a lot of noise and gave excitement. A grand prix, however, is a specific race designated internationally.

Page 39 of the latest annual report and accounts of the city council for 1988-89, with which we are all provided, refers to the Bill by saying that it amends

"the council's power relating to on-street motor racing providing for additional days which could pave the way for a Formula 1 Grand Prix to be held in Birmingham."

There are several references in the Bill to a potential grand prix. The hon. Member for Northfield, either on Second Reading or in the debate on the carry-over motion, referred to a grand prix. If the city were to obtain or try for a grand prix, as mentioned in the annual report, there is no doubt that we would be talking about millions of pounds. That is what it has cost other cities around the world to host an international grand prix. To stage the British international grand prix in Birmingham could cost £5 million or more.

No one argues that Birmingham would host such a grand prix every year. That would not be acceptable to Goodwood, Brands Hatch or Silverstone which host the grand prix on alternate years. No doubt there would be a bit of a row about those circuits holding the grand prix only once every four years instead of every three years. The cost to Birmingham could run into millions, but there is nothing in the Bill to impose financial controls on the city council, bearing in mind that the Birmingham City Council Act 1985 does not work financially. There is nothing to stop the council from promoting, touting, operating and funding a grand prix.

Mr. Roger King: Such a grand prix is an important matter and, in essence, we want four days of circuit closure to stage such a race. Just about every country would like to host a formula 1 grand prix and many eastern European countries, including Russia, have expressed an interest. I would not quibble with the hon. Gentleman's estimate of a cost of £5 million. I believe that it may well cost more to stage a full formula 1 grand prix, but the benefits from greater sponsorship would be considerable.

I cannot envisage such an opportunity presenting itself to the city council for 10 years, but should that happen it would be subject to much debate within the council chamber. It would be for the local councillors to decide whether they wanted to commit themselves to such an event. The Bill gives them the opportunity to stage such a debate should the opportunity arise. I wholeheartedly endorse the views expressed by the hon. Gentleman as I would not wish to be part and parcel of anything that gave anyone a blank cheque. I trust our local councillors, however, to make the decision.

Mr. Rooker: I did not want to go over the top in my estimate of the cost, but if the hon. Gentleman believes that it could come to more than £5 million, I accept that. The hon. Gentleman must recognise, however, that the Bill is a blank cheque. The only financial control on offer is that contained in section 14 of the 1985 Act, but we know that that is a dead duck. There is no financial control that could be imposed on the council.

If Birmingham were to hold a grand prix the hon. Member for Northfield must accept that the present circuit would be unsuitable. There would not only have to be a great deal of debate at Birmingham city council, but another Bill would have to be introduced in the House to require another circuit to be built. What a waste of parliamentary time. There is no power in the Bill to enable the city council to change the circuit. Such a change would require primary legislation.

Mr. King: I must put the hon. Gentleman right as the Bill includes provision for alterations to the circuit to extend dramatically the pit facilities. In effect, the Bristol road south route, the southern exit of the city, would become the area in which the cars would be serviced and maintained during the race. Our circuit is superior to that of Monaco, Detroit or Los Angeles. Were we to be offered a grand prix, I do not expect that we would have to build a completely new circuit.

Mr. Rooker: We would not be offered a grand prix; we would purchase it. Notwithstanding the changes to the pit and to the circuit as contained in the Bill, it would still be unsuitable for a grand prix. There are no powers in the Bill for the council to make another circuit without primary legislation. That important point must be taken on board.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): It would be truly unbearable for the people of Ladywood if the road race became a grand prix. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) for what he said, because, until now, two different stories have been told. In private we have been told that we might get a grand prix, whereas my constituents have been told that there is no chance of that. My constituents would be unable to tolerate a grand prix, but the sponsor of the Bill has notified us of his aspirations to have such a race.

I also want to put it on record that, early on in our consideration of the Bill, we were offered a deal by which some financial constraints would be put in the Bill in exchange for our agreement not to oppose it. Does my hon. Friend agree that such an offer represents an irresponsible attitude? Surely there should be a financial constraint in the Bill whatever the position adopted by the Bill's critics.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend touches on the content of some of the new clauses. I do not want to go into those in detail except to say that we were offered a new clause that put workable financial restrictions on the council—it is admitted that those in the 1985 Act do not work—if we dropped all our other objections to the detailed operation of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), given her constituency interests, was not prepared to do that. The strange thing is that the

new clause we were offered did not impose such financial restrictions if a grand prix were held. The new clause that we were offered has now been tabled, word for word, under my name as we want to examine this matter in detail.

Anyone who believes that the Birmingham city centre is all right for a grand prix must take into account that it will not be like the super prix. I shall give three statistics from the 1989 British grand prix. There were 500,000 people over three days, 1,000 helicopter movements, thousands of people camping on a site and 25 acres of hospitality tents. I know that we have tried for hospitality in Birmingham —but 25 acres of hospitality tents?

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Even some councillors could not cover that lot.

Mr. Rooker: I suggest that my hon. Friend does not put that on the record.

It is therefore of concern that the promoters have quite deliberately put in the Bill references to a grand prix, but have failed to insert the necessary safeguards, both financial and social, that would be required if a grand prix were achieved.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I emphasise once and for all that the new clause offered to my hon. Friend by his hon. Friends was intended to ensure only that the council kept the promise that it made last time with regard to the super prix. It was never intended that there should be any restrictions on the subsidy from poll tax payers to a grand prix.

Mr. Rooker: That is what it was all about and what this debate hinges on when one takes away the detail and the important, but minor, points. It hinges on the fact that it is a bottomless pit—an open cheque, to use the words of the hon. Member for Northfield—for the poll tax payers of Birmingham. Later, I shall compare the effect of the race with other issues.

The Bill was debated on 18 April last year on Second Reading and on the carry-over motion on 13 November. That was the only time in this House in 16 years that I have been shut up by a closure. That was just a quirk. Closures frequently happen and I make no complaint about that. I was on my feet for a few minutes in April at the end of the debate when the hon. Member for Northfield moved the closure. We did not think that the Bill had been debated sufficiently and that it deserved at least two sessions. After all, the equivalent of less than a full parliamentary day would be two three-hour sessions. On 13 November I was on my feet for about five or six minutes when my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath moved the closure. I make no complaint about that. All the procedures were followed to the letter. That is exactly what must happen with the rest of the Bill's passage. It merely means that more time is needed to raise the important issues about which there is widespread concern in the city of Birmingham.

This debate—and this applies to any future debates on the Bill—in no way affects the right or the future of two days motor racing on the streets of Birmingham. That is in the power of the 1985 Act and will not be altered in the sense that it will be done away with by the Bill. It is extended. If the Bill takes another 12 months to reach the statute book, or does not reach the statute book, motor racing can continue for two days on the streets of Birmingham. We are not seeking to go back on that or to knock out the 1985 Act.

I say to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that the motor racing will continue without any financial restrictions. The racing will not be affected by our debate today or any future debates we might have.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): One purpose of the Bill is to ensure that there is adequate practise for the two days of racing already incorporated in the 1985 Act. It is felt essential from many points of view that for driver acclimatisation and safety there should be at least one day for practise on the circuit. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is an excellent requirement?

Mr. Rooker: Yes, of course, on safety grounds I thoroughly agree. That is why the original Act had, in effect, one day for practise—Sunday—and one for racing —Monday. That was the way in which it was intended to be set up. The point that I am making and want to reinforce is that nothing in today's debate or our demanding the debates to which we are entitled to debate the Bill in any way affects Birmingham's right to operate road races for two days a week.

Mr. Terry Davis: Two days a year.

Mr. Rooker: Two days a year.

Mr. Davis: It would like it for two days a week.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) says that it would like it to be two days a week. I meant for two days a year.

If the 1985 Act, particularly section 14, was working, it would mean that after this year—the fifth year—the right to operate the race would be curtailed. It is clear that a loss has been incurred over a five-year period. In no way will this year's race make up the losses of previous years. Therefore, there will be a cumulative loss over five years. The 1985 Act contained the fail-safe, the seeds to stop it if it went wrong financially, but those controls are not operating. This debate and any future debates will not affect Birmingham's right to the race.

It is the wilful disregard of secton 14—the financial safeguard—that has led to several amendments to the Bill being tabled and my initial regret that the Bill, having come from Committee, does not contain the safeguards. In the statement which they sent to all hon. Members for today's debate, the promoters requested that we should not accept any of the amendments. When those amendments are debated, I have no doubt that we shall have answers from the hon. Member from Northfield about why we should not accept any of them.

I want to concentrate on the Bill so far, and to do so I must concentrate on the operation of the 1985 Act because the two run in tandem. To kick off, I can do no better than use the words of Mr. David Torvell of Pershore road contained in a letter that he sent to hon. Members last week. I do not know to which hon. Members it was sent. It clearly states: "Two: Selected Birmingham MPs." I have heard many things about the Bill, for example, meetings to discuss the Bill in Brighton last October, to which I was not invited. Obviously, meetings for selected Members do not include me, or any of my hon. Friends here today.

[Mr. Rooker]

They may have included my hon. Friend for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) my own Member for Parliament, but he has not discussed that with me.

The letter from David Torvell was sent to Birmingham Members last week. It was dated 19 February and touches on the Bill's detail and, more importantly, the way that the Bill has operated in practice. The House should appreciate how the laws it passes operate in practice. I shall be happy to let Conservative Members, if they have not received a copy, have one later. Mr. Torvell raises some points and sets out his position regarding the road race.

He says that the race has been run for four years,

"time enough for teething troubles to have been overcome."

That is a fair and moderate statement. He continues:

"Over that period the Birmingham City Council has repeatedly proved itself unfit to manage the event. Restrictions imposed by Parliament, and undertakings given by the City Council to the Select Committee, are treated by Council officials with open contempt."

That is what Mr. Torvell said with reference to the Committee that considered the Bill early last year. He goes on to make three points regarding the powers to extend the 1985 Act that are implicit in the Bill. I shall give one example. He talks about the increasing dangers and inconvenience to which residents and travellers are exposed. Writing about last year's race, he states:

"Work on the circuit was authorised and advertised to begin not before 7th August".

That was in preparation for the race on 27 and 28 August last year. He continues:

"The Roundabout at Pershore Road/Belgrave Road was obstructed from 19th July to 28th July for reconstruction of a soft-crash area. Contractors confirmed that the work was explicitly for the Road Race (confirmed by City Engineers Dept). Contractors' vehicles not in use and not needed for work obstructed the carriageway."

Pershore road, as anyone knows, is a main radial route serving much of south Birmingham and north Worcestershire; it is very much a commuter lane into Birmingham——

Mr. Terry Davis: And from Northfield.

Mr. Rooker: Indeed; the constituents of the hon. Member for Northfield must have suffered severe disruption travelling into the city centre.

To return to the letter:

"At a meeting on 14 September Mr. A. J. Richardson (City Engineers Dept) agreed that the work had been done for the Road Race. He also agreed that traffic had been obstructed. When asked why he had disregarded the time limits laid down by Parliament he laughed and said, 'I do not need to pay attention to those powers. I can do it whenever I like under my other powers.'".

I shall refer to that point several times in my speech because it is crucial.

Mr. Torvell's second point was as follows:

"Following the race held on 27-28 August 1989, the contractors failed (as on all previous occasions) to clear up dangerous and unsightly materials."

He gives a couple of examples—of scaffolding planks left hanging over the edge of the underpass 20ft above fast traffic, of metal posts and fittings and pieces of wood left lying on the highway, and so on. We know what a danger such objects pose to road users and pedestrians.

"A new sewer access (known locally as Prince Edward's Latrine) was left uncovered on public open space beside two primary schools."

These are serious allegations——

Mr. Bevan: Even if Mr. Torvell is correct about the clearing up—and I do not necessarily concede that—does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the amendments that we shall consider this evening would reduce the period of cleaning up from 20 to 10 days, thereby ensuring that the hon. Gentleman's point was dealt with?

Mr. Rooker: I shall come to that crucial point later. I promise that this is not one of those times when an hon. Member says that he will deal with a question before he sits down but never answers it.

Ms. Short: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware, as are my constituents, that all the restrictions in the existing legislation—on when the council can erect fences and take them down and on clearing up—have been breached, so how can we have confidence that the new restrictions in this Bill will be honoured?

Mr. Rooker: I cannot answer that question, except to say that we have to bear in mind the experience of the past four years.

Mr. Torvell told me that Mr. Richardson was asked on 14 September what action he had taken on these points. He replied:

"'If, after 16 December I receive reports that contractors have not cleared up, then I may consider adjusting their payments.'"

When asked why no checks had been made on the dangers to motorists and pedestrians and why no attempt had been made to supervise the contractors, no answer was forthcoming from the city engineer's department. Mr. Torvell goes on to mention entertainment and hospitality, but I do not want to go into that in detail, save to point out that he mentions that the *Birmingham Post* and the *Birmingham Evening Mail* consistently censored all references to hospitality in readers' letters. Perhaps my hon. Friends will deal with such points when they speak on the amendments.

My last point relates to the council's 11 undertakings to the Select Committee in respect of future races. The undertakings were read out by the hon. Member for Northfield in our November debate. Mr. Richardson makes the point that the council undertook, in a letter from Mr. Tricklebank of the chief executive's department, to implement the undertakings that could be implemented for the 1989 race. In other words, there was no need to wait for the passage of the Bill to implement the undertakings —they are not consequential upon it. Some of them could have been implemented for the 1989 race——

Mr. Terry Davis: I believe that my hon. Friend may have attributed to Mr. Richardson remarks that were made by Mr. Torvell. Mr. Richardson, in the city engineer's department, is alleged to have taken a nonchalant attitude to breaches of undertakings.

I want to draw my hon. Friend's attention to Mr. Torvell's point about costs being misattributed. My hon. Friend knows that Mr. Torvell claims that the road race has damaged school playgrounds and buildings. That damage has been made good by the education department from the education budget, and the money does not appear in the accounts of the road race. I am sure that my hon. Friend shares my genuine and general concern about the lack of repairs to school buildings in Birmingham. Some schools in my constituency have leaking roofs and

we are continually told that the money to undertake these essential repairs is not available—yet the education budget is being robbed in the way I have described.

Mr. Rooker: It appears to be easier to get the super prix circuit resurfaced than to get school playgrounds resurfaced. I hope that I did not misquote Mr. Torvell by calling him Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Gentleman has made great play of damage to playgrounds, but is it not true that the education budget in Birmingham was underspent last year and that the money had not been put to use? Is it not therefore a little amoral to bring in that argument?

Mr. Rooker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not saying that if the education budget has been underspent the money can be chucked into the road race budget——

Mr. Bevan: I am not saying that.

Mr. Rooker: No, but that is what happened—or what Mr. Torvell told us what happened.

Dame Jill Knight: If the road race caused damage that was not put right immediately, that is a serious matter that I would want to take up. The question that the hon. Gentleman dragged into the debate, however, perhaps because he thought it might be a good political point, was that the fabric of schools elsewhere in Birmingham needed attention. I suggest that those are two different issues. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) was valid: the fabric fund had not been spent as it should have been. The hon. Gentleman, however, has made a point solely to do with the road race, and it is a serious one. I was interested to hear about it because I have not heard it before.

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful for the tone of that intervention. I abhor underspending of budgets as much as I abhor overspending—it upsets the finances. It is just not on to leave schools, some of which do not get painted and some of whose roofs do not get repaired for 20 years, without maintenance. I have made my views on that privately and vocally known to those in a position to do something about the problem. It was not I who raised the issue of school playgrounds; it was Mr. Torvell, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill quoted that part of his letter.

As for the undertakings, Mr. Torvell says:

"In the opinion of local residents not one"

of the 11 undertakings

"was implemented."

That beggars belief. There was a promise of a telephone line for citizens needing information: no line was provided. The normal lines were unmanned. There was a promise that there would be no undue interference with religious worship. Worship at St. Luke's church was disrupted by engine tests within 50 yards beginning two hours early. St. Catherine's was also affected. There was a commitment to the provision of crossing points for people resident within the circuit, to be usable by disabled persons. There was inadequate general provision, and no provision at all for wheelchairs or the elderly. He also makes the point, which I shall come to later, that noise level records are to be made available to the public. Mr. Torvell tells me that no measures were taken and no information was made available, but that is not right because noise measurements were taken in the 1989 race. I do not know why they have not been made available.

I have in my file another letter from, I think, the chief executive's department to another citizen of Birmingham. It makes clear that noise measurements were taken in 1989 but that there was no intention to make them publicly available. Such availability was one of the 11 specific undertakings given to the Committee and repeated to the House by the hon. Member for Northfield. Mr. Torvell can speak for himself, but I am happy to make his letter available to hon. Members. He is a resident of Elmwood court in Pershore road. I shall not give the number of the house.

I should like to refer to another letter from an aggrieved citizen who lives virtually on the circuit. It was given to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill who was contacted last week by a resident in Wheeley's road, a Mr. Jim Berrow. He recited many points similar to those made by Mr. Torvell. In a letter dated 19 February he makes a specific complaint about advertising hoardings placed in totally unsuitable venues. He says that they are year-round eyesores, the revenues from which are set against the revenues for this weekend. If the billboards were making income for the city for the rest of the year, that would not mess up the motor race accounts. Mr. Berrow says that the costs are spiralling and, generally speaking, the books are not being balanced other than by artificial accounting.

In my files for last year I have dozens of such letters. I have chosen those two because they are fresh and came into the hands of hon. Members in the last few days. They contain the mature thoughts of people who live on the circuit. In a postscript to his letter Mr. Torvell says that he was

"a strong supporter of the road-race until I saw how the city council mismanage it and wallow in the . . . perks."

I do not propose to go into the matter of perks because I do not think that there are many for the road race. I think he was making a point about no financial controls.

There were many representations from businesses. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) smiles. This is an important matter.

Mr. Bevan: I am smiling not because I do not think that the matter is important but because the hon. Gentleman discarded the second of the letter writer's points while totally accepting the first. I thought that perhaps the hon. Gentleman was being a little discriminatory in using the letter.

Mr. Rooker: I should be happy at some future date—but certainly not tonight—to discuss the hospitality accounts. I am more than happy to discuss what is available to hon. Members.

Mr. Bevan: Why is one point right and the other one wrong?

Mr. Rooker: I did not say that it was wrong. I said that I would not go into that but simply raised the bald point that was made in the letter.

I shall now deal with the businesses that are affected. There is no doubt that businesses gain, or, to put it more accurately, that some businesses gain. I shall give two brief examples. The first is in a letter that I received last September after last year's race. It was from the manager of the Wharf Beefeater Steak House and Travel Inn in Bridge street. It is a brand new building in the city centre

[Mr. Rooker]

alongside the canal at Gas Street basin. I have not been inside the building but have seen it from a canal boat with my hon. Friends the Members for Erdington and for Hodge Hill. We were doing our bit to clean up the canals along the back streets of Birmingham. At that time I saw the building and thought, "Ah, that is where the letter came from." The letter is dated 2 September and states:

"As a new comer to the City, with an Hotel, Restaurant and Bars in the central area, I looked forward to the prospect of a welcome increase to my business over the Bank Holiday from the Super-Prix. Far from an increase, I rapidly discovered that apart from a few, well established adjacent businesses, my takings actually fell dramatically over the period. On Saturday evening there were licensees coming in looking to see who was doing the trade."

Licensees in Birmingham were on a most peculiar pub crawl, because they were going from licensed premises to licensed premises to see to where the extra trade was going as a result of the super prix. The manager went on to say that there was no way in which the city centre could cope with a super prix.

Mr. Corbett: I understand exactly the point that my hon. Friend is making. For some reason the West Midlands police cone off the whole of the Bradford street area. Anybody who knows Birmingham knows that at weekends that is the best place in the city centre in which to park. One publican there put his tables outside, but because the area was coned off the police said, "Hey you, put the tables back inside." That is not the fault of the city council. Does my hon. Friend realise that West Midlands police dictates the number of officers? The police order about 600 officers and about 10 people a year are arrested for petty offences, such as picking pockets. My hon. Friend mentioned Silverstone, which hold about 500,000 people. Is he aware that just 32 police officers are present at Silverstone? That explains part of the cost.

Mr. Rooker: No one complains that the city council organises the number of police. I back the police on this. After the first or second race—I think that it was the second one which I visited—I wrote to the chief constable and asked him for a full report about the policing and about any problems that had occurred as a result of pubs being open all day. I also asked about pickpockets and so on. I have a letter which gives a clean bill of health and I am quite happy to make it available. I do not remember the date, but I think it is probably 1987. The reason that it is so peaceful is the decision of the police to police it in the way that they do.

Mr. Terry Davis: Is my hon. Friend trying to tell me that there are anything like 600 police officers involved in the Handsworth carnival? I can tell him that there are not.

Mr. Rooker: I do not want to go into detail. The letter from the assistant chief constable is dated 16 September 1987, after the 1987 race. My hon. Friend can read it. I back the police as the appropriate body of trained and experienced personnel to decide how a city centre function such as this should be policed.

There are problems for businesses. Unless a business is in the core area, it has a problem, as my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington admits in respect of the pub that he mentioned. In our last debate my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood raised the issue of Aston and Taylor, the newspaper distributors. She was under pressure of time and received much barracking from hon. Members and in the time available justice was not done to the case that Aston and Taylor had made. That business has nothing to do with the super prix, it receives no spin-off, and it is not in that location because of the super prix. It is in purpose-built premises that were constructed about six years ago.

Aston and Taylor is an old company which was established in 1847 or 1848 and has a turnover of several million pounds a year. It is not a bucket shop operation, yet it has been extremely badly treated because of the super prix. There have been discussions about what has happened. I shall raise a couple of points that are relevant to other matters that I have mentioned. The company says that it wanted some changes in the legislation but also raises a bone of contention about the effect of the race. The company says:

"If the provisions of the 1985 Act were adhered to the Company would be able to conduct its business without too much difficulty but it is particularly concerned about the closure of roads for the times and periods set out in the Bill. The City Council have closed roads well outside the time limits of the 1985 Act, as early as 6 am and as late as 8 pm, by using other enactments, e.g. Town Police Clauses Act 1847."

That Act is of the same age as the company concerned. In addition, the city has closed roads under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. In other words, there is other legislation that a body like the city council can use, in addition to the powers given to it by this House in respect of the operation of a road race, which can cause massive dislocation to companies. In this case Aston and Taylor makes it quite clear that

"The company does not derive any benefit from its proximity to the circuit."

Referring to the Select Committee's recommendations, it says:

"Contrary to the Council's evidence, the Company was not approached to give evidence at the Select Committee hearing, nor were they visited for their views to be canvassed."

That is a massive omission on the part of those responsible for canvassing opinion, putting this Bill together and making provision for amendments. It could be seen as a criticism of a Committee of this House. In any case, it is a major criticism by an important company whose business is badly affected. It is an important point because many people feel that there has been bad faith.

My hon. Friends and I have said that the financial restrictions are worthless. Many people might say that that is just a case of Members moaning and looking for a headline. That is not so. However, when people see that they themselves are affected by matters unrelated to the points of substance that we raise they say, "This is not fair. There's bad faith abroad here." That is important. The question of noise levels, which I gave as an example, certainly stands up to the test. A promise that was given to the Select committee, discussed with the residents and repeated to this House by the hon. Member for Northfield, as reported in columns 89 and 90 of the *Official Report* of 13 November 1989, could have been implemented for the 1989 race, but was not. People say that that is an example of bad faith, but then they say, "Perhaps all these other people making negative points are right. Perhaps it is true that there is a financial loophole, that there are no financial controls, that this could be really bad for the future." If hon. Members want to know why I claim to know that noise measurements were taken last year, I can tell them that I am simply quoting from a letter from the

environmental protection unit of the environmental services department. That letter, dated 14 September 1989, says:

"Monitoring was carried out this year purely as a pilot run in anticipation of any future undertaking, and there are no proposals to publish a report at this stage."

The words

"in anticipation of any future undertaking"

suggest that the undertakings are tied to the implementation of this Bill. But that was not the intention. We are not in a bargaining position like that. These were genuine undertakings offered by the city council to ease the problem for local people, yet local people say, "Bad faith."

Section 4 of the 1985 Act is replaced by clause 6 of this Bill. The section is being taken out and rewritten. As clause 6 is the subject of proposed amendments, I shall not go into detail at this stage, except to make a point that is worth putting on record as it will figure in our proceedings later. The section that is being taken out contains words that, in effect, entitle the council

"to provide or arrange for the provision of all such services, facilities and things (including prizes) and do all such other acts as they may think necessary for that purpose."

This has to do with the power to run a road race. Those words are so wide that it is impossible to see why the council persists in requiring an Act of Parliament with some controls on hours and times of day.

That brings me to a question that was put to me earlier by the hon. Member for Yardley. The words that I have just quoted have been thrown back at Birmingham citizens time and again by the city council when people have written in about something they regarded as being wrong. Perhaps the barriers had not been cleared away in time, or they had been erected too soon. "Outside the law," people say. The city council then throws their words back at them and says that, in effect, it can do what it likes. That is what the words in the legislation mean.

In particular, people have questioned the need for work to be carried out weeks, rather than days, in advance. Clause 3 provides the extra time that has been referred to —20 days before and 10 days after. If extra time is what is needed, why do we need words, such as those in clause 6, that give the council power to do anything it wants? I have here a letter to someone who has complained about this time limit. It says:

"However, the Act entitles the council, in making arrangements for the motor race, to do all these things. The council have a similar power to carry out such works as they think necessary or convenient for the purpose . . . It is this power which is being used."

In other words, this Act is littered with extra powers that make the 20-day and 10-day provisions absolutely meaningless. Why are such provisions necessary when such words are being retained? That is my answer to the hon. Member for Yardley. The council appeared to insist on retaining these gateways so that it might do things at its own convenience, whatever the disruption to the citizens of Birmingham, whatever the rules provided for by the Act. That is what looks like bad faith.

Mr. Bevan: I do not want continually to interrupt the hon. Member, but I must point out that the notes that I have say that the dismantling of equipment should be carried out within 10 days, not 20 days. It is not, as the hon. Member said, an extension of the period; it is a reduction of the period and an extension of the hours from 8 am to 8 pm so that the work may be done more extensively. The trouble that the hon. Member said had been caused by the time taken to remove these obstacles would no longer obtain.

Mr. Rooker: I accept that this is an attempt to meet a problem by changing the hours and the days, but there is no sanction in the event of that not being achieved; and it will not need to be achieved, because the words in the new section 4, which are in clause 6 of this Bill, enable the council to

"provide or arrange for the provision of all such services and facilities and things . . . and do all such other acts"—

all such other acts—

"as they may think necessary or convenient for that purpose."

Of course, the purpose is the holding of a road race. So it will be possible to go outside those limits. My argument is that either we should put the limits in and mean them, and apply some legislative sanctions if they are not carried out, or we should leave the limits out and take out these words. Why should we leave a gaping gateway that will enable the council to say, "We have put these new limits in. That will shut the MPs up, and will make us look as though we are doing the job properly"? I think that that is unfair, and the citizens who have had those words thrown back at them think that it is unfair.

Mr. Roger King: I have heard what the hon. Gentleman said about how he interprets the Act of Parliament, and I suppose that, taken at face value, it would be interpreted in that way. However, I think the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that, as the subject of an Act of Parliament, this matter has been considered very carefully by the Select Committee. If the city were found to be in hopeless and total breach of these requirements it would be a very serious thing indeed. I do not think that the city would willingly exceed the powers that this House, I hope, will give it.

Mr. Rooker: Yes, but there is nothing that the individual citizen of Birmingham can do about it. No citizen will take the council to court. The district auditor cannot be brought in. There is no redress for the citizen. If those words remain, that gateway, that massive legislation gap, will allow the city to do anything that it deems convenient or necessary for the purposes of the legislation. It will not need to take seriously the days and hours that are provided for. The city engineer's department made it clear to people who complained that it took the action that it did under the powers not of the 1985 Act but of other legislation. That is unfair, because the individual is given no redress.

As to finances, although I am not a lawyer, I know what I was told on the Floor of this House, and I understood it. The Ministers presumed that I understood their meaning. It is now clear that the city council, lawyers and accountants know that I understood what I was told concerning financial restrictions and probity, and in respect of my efforts to ensure that there was no massive financial loophole. They still know that that is my understanding, but they can top it out. They say, "We can get this through Parliament. No one will listen. They are just a few MPs, complaining. It will be OK. We'll roller-coast it through." I do not have to accept that. I find the council guilty and wanting in terms of the financial probity of the whole project.

Ms. Short: Does not my hon. Friend think that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) is being

[Ms. Short]

naive, to put it mildly, in suggesting that the council will comply with the new legislation? All our experience is that the limit set in the 1985 Act—with which I believed, naively, the council would comply—has been breached every year.

Mr. Rooker: I accepted the 1985 Act in good faith. I saw no reason to question the undertakings that I received. When I read the Bill, I thought, "That's fine. I wish it well." In fact, that Act has been breached every year. Above all, each year there have been breaches of the financial controls.

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Gentleman makes certain allegations regarding lack of redress. That aspect must partly be dealt with by clause 19(1), (2), (3)(a), (b), (c) and (d) and all thereafter, over nearly two pages. Clause 19(1) provides:

"If any person entitled to an interest in premises suffers damage to or in respect of land or other loss in consequence of the restriction of access to those premises under section 5 (Closing of streets for motor races) of this Act the Council shall, subject to the provisions of this section, pay to such person compensation in respect of that damage or other loss."

It then recites the circumstances in which compensation is payable to people who have a rightful grievance regarding the strict interpretation and removal of obstacles not being dealt with in regard to the time schedule therein. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman and any reasonable person would agree that the Bill contained myriad powers whereby the individual could take action, strictly in accordance with the legislation, if the council did not comply with the terms that the House was asked to agree in respect of the re-timetabling.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman misses the point completely. It is a question of how one defines "an interest". People have an interest as businesses.

Mr. Bevan: And they are covered under clause 19(1).

Mr. Rooker: I know that they are, but people also have a wider interest, as ratepayers and as citizens of the city. An individual citizen reading the restrictions in the Bill regarding the removal of barriers may realise that they have not been complied with, even if he lives in postal district B30, which is way outside the area immediately affected, He may not even travel to work through the circular.

Such a person may ask the council by what lawful authority the barriers were erected so long before the race. He would point that, as Parliament did not allow a period longer than 10 days, the Act appeared to have been breached. That is the kind of complaint that concerns me. There is no redress for a citizen making such a complaint, who will only receive a reply reciting all the gateway wording that I have twice put on the record. Nevertheless, such an individual has as much right as anyone else to be satisfied that an Act of Parliament is being complied with, in respect of its generalities, in the same way that any business or domestic ratepayer in the immediate area of the circuit is entitled to compensation if damage is caused to their property.

My next point alludes to the remarks of the hon. Member for Yardley. We are told that the race is good for publicity, as measured by newspaper column inches, minutes of television coverage, and so on.

Ms. Short: Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of compensation, may I point out that, although it is to be the same under the new legislation as under the 1985 Act, the Land Compensation Act 1961 has been widely found to be unsuitable for making small local claims. It involves a costly and cumbersome procedure that is not widely understood. Many of my constituents who lost income from their businesses as a consequence of the race examined the possibility of claiming compensation, but found that the expense would be too great. Although it may look as though compensation is available, in practice the process is such that people do not bother, even though they suffer a loss of income.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is right. I omitted to mention the wider legal costs involved for someone with a wider grievance. It is not a question of reporting the matter for investigation at no cost, through the district auditor, for example. Anyone who complains has quoted back at him other wording from the 1985 Act, so naturally he says to himself, "This is a waste of time. What are the MPs doing? Why did Parliament even get involved? It is all a con." It is totally outwith the resources of most people to take the matter to court.

I return to the question of costs, mentioned by the hon. Member for Yardley. In one of the brief interventions that I was allowed to make before the closure on our previous debate, I made the point that there is also a social cost. We know that someone has put a value on the advantages of the race. That is how the financial fiddle has been worked. I do not mean that the councillors themselves have been involved in any personal financial fiddle, but to me the way the project is run is a fiddle. But that is not a legal term. Not all the true costs are entered on the other side of the account.

I refer, for example, to the social cost of delaying road traffic. In the 13 November debate, I pointed out that the costs of delay, over two or four weeks, as a consequence of the building and dismantling of the circuit was estimated at £140,000 in respect of cars alone, not including lorries. That was based on normal assumptions, conservatively low traffic-flow estimates, and Department of Transport information. To date, my claim has not been rebutted. That £140,000 is an add-on cost. It is a cost to society that cannot really be quantified. Nevertheless, we know that society paid out that sum of money. The delays meant that £140,000 of taxpayers' money disappeared in that way. That amount cannot be specifically quantified, but we know that it was a cost attributable to the Birmingham super prix.

Mr. Roger King: I have listened to what the hon. Gentleman has said about so-called social costs. He has mentioned the figure of £140,000. One accepts that public events—whether a milk race, a walkathon or a variety of things that take place on the public highway—will impinge on other road users. I think that that is agreed. So do roadworks, among other things. However, spread over 20 days and over the number of vehicles using the roads, the cost to the individual road user cannot amount to much more than a few pennies. That does not sound much to me. If one takes into account traffic flows in and out of Birmingham throughout the day spread over 20 days, the cost per individual road user will not be an astronomical sum.

Mr. Rooker: I am talking about the social costs—the costs to society. At the end of the day all those pennies, collected together, are paid for by taxpayers. If the hon. Member for Northfield has not learnt that lesson after all his years of service in this House, I am sorry for him. That enables me to understand why he can complain about some aspects of Labour council policy, which do not relate to this subject, and to support some of the crazy policies of the Government. Does he not make the connection between the crazy policies and the wider costs to society?

Someone has paid the £140,000 worth of social costs. We know that the money has been paid. Otherwise we would not have a road or a bridge building programme, and the Department of Transport would not do any road planning. The point is that those are developed because of measuring the cost, although one keeps the costs as low as possible.

My second to final point—there must be a word for that.

Ms. Short: Penultimate.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is more educated than I am. I shall probably not now make it my penultimate point, as I shall digress. Anyway, in relation to charges and concessions, I am upset about the Bill because I think it is another area where the Committee has not sufficiently considered the 1985 Act. Section 12 covers charges for admissions and concessions. The concessions are covered by the new clauses, and I shall not detail them because we can debate them at some other time.

There are no concessions in the 1985 Act—or rather there is a concession but it is discretionary on the council. It may give concessions of up to 10 per cent. for certain classes of people. It granted them one year but did not do it again. Then the council said that it would give a reduction for advance bookings rather than concessions. However, that is not the concession that we were seeking or were promised in 1985.

We know that attendance at the 1988 race on Sunday was made up of 31 per cent. people from Birmingham, 29 per cent. people from the midlands and 40 per cent. people from the rest of the country. On Monday the figures were 23 per cent. from Birmingham, 29 per cent. from the midlands and 48 per cent. from the rest of the country. One could argue that people in Birmingham had to go to work on Monday, but it was a bank holiday. Essentially the difference between Sunday and Monday was that the ticket price was vastly different and there was an 8 per cent. drop in attendance by Brummie people on Monday compared to Sunday. That is why we are asking for a concession as of right for Birmingham citizens.

We are told that it is difficult. I received a letter on 8 February 1989 from the chairperson of the road race committee which said that proof of residence was a problem to the organisers of the ticket sales. However, that problem has now been solved thanks to the stout work of the hon. Member for Northfield. He was a good bag-carrier and parliamentary private secretary to the poll tax Minister during consideration of the poll tax Bill. If the Government are looking for a scapegoat, I offer them the hon. Member for Northfield.

Proof of residence is no longer a problem with the poll tax. Every citizen who is registered for the tax in Birmingham now has a number, and I see no reason why proof of registration for the poll tax cannot be used to get a concession on tickets for the race. I claim that that is justified and required because so few of the public at the road race are Brummies, and on the day that the price goes up fewer Brummies attend. The reason for that must be the price of the tickets, and as long as Birmingham citizens are subsidising the road race out of their poll tax they should get as of right a concession on the ticket price.

Ms. Short: Is my hon. Friend aware of the report of the project co-ordinator to the general purposes committee on 17 January which recommended:

"In the light of representations made by Members of Parliament during discussions on the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill a 'Birmingham discount' be re-introduced. This will be for Monday trackside tickets purchased in advance and show a saving of £1·00 on the normal in advance ticket price. To ease problems of identification they have to be bought in person."

I thought that my hon. Friend might like to know that the pressure that we have put on has produced a result—they plan to reduce the increased ticket price by £1. Tickets are going up by £2 this year.

Mr. Rooker: Does my hon. Friend know the ticket price?

Ms. Short: For Monday trackside tickets, purchased in advance, the price will be £9 plus £2, which is £11, purchased on the day £10 plus £2, purchased in advance for the grandstand, £25—which is going up by £5 to £30—or £30 plus £5, to £35.

Mr. Rooker: One pound is not much, is it? I do not think that that is enough as a concession. It is not in the Bill, which says that concessions may be granted, but it does not give the right to grant a concession specifically to the citizens of Birmingham. This is one reason why I have tabled a new clause. The Bill lists qualified persons, but it does not include poll tax payers in Birmingham, and that is why that needs to be put into the Bill.

I look forward to seeing an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Northfield during the later stages of the Bill.

Mr. Roger King: People know that I have advocated the merits of the community charge quite succinctly. The problem in Birmingham is that the wrong party is levying the charge at the moment. Next May things will be very different and the benefits will be obvious to the people of Birmingham.

When I read the amendment I found the idea of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) about the community charge attractive. I think that people in Birmingham should be able to come to the motor race with a privileged discount. I think that the wording of the Act is correct as it stands, and I am giving only a personal view, not a view on behalf of the promoters of the Bill, but the hon. Member's idea has some merits and might be worthy of examination in the future.

Mr. Rooker: I look forward to our debates on the amendments which can be changed if there is some problem with the wording. There is nothing to stop the promoters or the hon. Member for Northfield from tabling an amendment to the new clauses.

There is no need to play with words—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) wishes to intervene. No, he would not dare. It appears to be the promoters' intention to continue as before, except for the one issue just mentioned by the hon. Member for

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Northfield. No financial controls will be exercised, and therefore section 14 of the 1985 Act is a dead duck. As long as that is the case, I shall oppose ratepayers and poll tax payers being asked to subsidise the race, which is why I shall try to stop the new clauses.

As a Member of Parliament representing the greatest number of poll tax payers in any constituency in Birmingham, I cannot do nothing or simply acquiesce to the council's requirements. It is not the fuction of Members of Parliament simply to rubber-stamp the council's requirements. Otherwise, there would be no purpose in our debates and procedures. What is planned in the Bill will be even worse if there is a grand prix, as I mentioned when I began my speech.

We have solid capital achievements in Birmingham—the national exhibition centre, the international convention centre and the forthcoming indoor sports hall. We are even doing more to deploy our fine heritage and to improve culture in the city, and the cost and expense of that is justifiable because it improves the capital assets and the human values of our city. The road race is a plughole down which ratepayers' and poll tax payers' money will be poured unless it is stopped.

Mr. Roger King: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I shall be pleased to give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes to tell me how I can plug that hole with amendments.

Mr. King: I am not going to do that.

As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, our city is full of plugholes down which money can be poured. A recent example is the £25 million overspend at the national exhibition centre. That is big money. However we interpret the accounts—and the city council has only gone along with what the auditor has told it to do—not subsidising the motor race would involve, on the most pessimistic estimate, a reduction in the so-called Knowles tax from £406 to £405. That is if we assume that it is being subsidised; I maintain that it is not.

Mr. Rooker: I deplore such outrageous personalisation of the debate. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the city council is under a legal obligation to set a budget. His scandalous remarks highlight what I said at the outset: this is the first known example of his supporting the city council, which in general he denigrates whenever he has the opportunity.

I am not here to debate the poll tax—I would be called to order if I did—but I must take up what the hon. Gentleman said about the national exhibition centre. The centre contributes to Birmingham's rate fund, and will do the same for poll tax payers; thus it constitutes an asset for the city and its people. It is deplorable that the hon. Gentleman should support proposals to privatise it.

I rest my case, and await the opportunity to debate the amendments and new clauses in due course.

8.23 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I join the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) in expressing sorrow at the absence of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). He would have dearly loved to be with us, and we hope that he will soon be restored to health. The hon. Gentleman claimed that he would be with us in spirit, and doubtless he is—but, I suggest, with Conservative Members rather than with the hon. Member for Perry Barr. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman's dearest wish would be for us to proceed with the Bill as quickly as possible and for it to be carried as soon as possible with the largest possible majority, as it was on Second Reading—by, I believe, 145 to 24. Those figures substantiate the tremendous backing for the Bill, not only in the House but on the city council, on which both parties supported it almost to a man—and woman. I suspect that it will always have majority support—in the House, on the council and among the residents of Ladywood.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman knows nothing about the opinions of people in Ladywood, so I suggest that he withdraw that remark. I know very much better than he does what they are thinking and saying about the race.

Let us put the hon. Gentleman's cheap jibe aside for a moment, however. He mentioned the votes on Second Reading. Perhaps he would care to give us the party breakdown. Should he not put on record that the 145-strong majority consisted overwhelmingly of Conservative Members, and that the opponents of the Bill were Labour Members? As he probably knows, Birmingham Members who oppose the race have not sought to mobilise support from their colleagues in the parliamentary Labour party: it is the Conservative party organisation that has brought the Bill this far.

Mr. Bevan: That would be extraordinary if it were true, because both parties were represented in the vote on Second Reading. Indeed, the Labour-controlled Birmingham city council requested that the Bill be passed—an example honourably followed by most of the Labour Members who were present at our last debate, as I was.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) tried to suggest that residents of the circuit area and its surroundings do not want the race, but that is entirely unsubstantiated and unproven. The promoter's arguments that local people want the race, however, are substantiated and proven—the many polls that have been carried out have produced an overwhelmingly favourable result. If anyone should withdraw remarks that are without foundation, I suggest that it is the hon. Lady.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bevan: Yes, if the hon. Lady wishes to pursue her dubious point.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman is beginning to make me extremely angry. If he claims to know more than I do about the views of people who live near the track in Ladywood, everyone in Birmingham who knows anything about the matter will join me in laughing at him. The residents have carried out their own polls, which have been cited in previous debates and which contradict the claims of the city council. If I remember rightly, in our last debate the hon. Gentleman himself read out the result of such a poll. It showed that—according to the city council's figures, and given the sample of residents who replied to the questions that it asked—nearly half opposed the holding of a four-day event.

Mr. Bevan: Certainly I read out the result of the poll, which showed a clear and substantial majority in favour of

the race. Furthermore, the amendments which have been diligently passed—they were read out by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) so I will not repeat them—would considerably benefit the hon. Lady's constituents by giving them additional rights and powers. They would also protect the rights and powers of those who can take action under the compensation laws, and the business people involved. If the hon. Lady tried to resist the Bill's progress, she would ensure that the measures that the amendments would build into it would not be backed, and I am surprised that she should take such an attitude.

I remind the hon. Lady that the formulation of the Bill has taken a long time. It was some 20 years ago that I first voted in its favour in the then city council of Birmingham. We lost it then, but I remember that Sir Richard Knowles—in one of his first speeches on the council—spoke movingly in its support, and I know that he has not changed his mind. He wants the Bill to be passed and to become law. I repeat that the city council, hon. Members and the people of the city of Birmingham want the Bill to be passed.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman was an experienced councillor. I believe that he served for 20 years.

Mr. Bevan: Twenty-one.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman also has his own business. What does he think about the financial probity of section 14 of the 1985 Act? Section 14 was intended to provide a safety net which would not lead to a massive call on city resources, but it is not working—there is a loophole. Does the hon. Gentleman have a view about that? If so, it would help if he shared it with the House.

Mr. Bevan: I was a Member of Parliament, as was the hon. Member for Perry Barr, when the Birmingham City Council (No. 1) Bill was passed. I was satisfied with the provisions that were written into it. However, progress is being impeded. The Select Committee considered a series of amendments which it considered should be incorporated in the Bill. They deal with that aspect of the matter. The amendments deal to my complete satisfaction with whatever protection is necessary.

Mr. Terry Davis: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the amendments which have been made to the Bill. He says that they deal with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). Will he explain which amendment deals with the loophole in section 14 of the 1985 Act which has been exploited? If he cannot find such an amendment—I do not think that he can—will he give us the benefit of his views instead of evading my hon. Friend's question? Why does he condone going back on the assurance given by Sir Reginald Eyre in 1985?

Mr. Bevan: The purpose behind consideration of the amendments is, regrettably, not just to debate them but to delay progress of the Bill. One result for the delay would be that the reforms to which the amendments would lead could not be incorporated in time for this year's race. Unless a tight timetable is followed, it will be impossible to incorporate them in the Bill, with the result that the benefit that would have been gained from them will be lost.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman has not answered the question put to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr. He has raised a separate issue to which we shall return later—which of the amendments will not be available to the city council for this year's race if the Bill is not passed. Many of the amendments made in Committee could have been observed by the city council during last year's race, had it had a mind so to do, but most or all of them were not observed. Before we deal with that point, however, will the hon. Gentleman please answer the point put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr? How does he defend the breaching of the assurance given by Sir Reginald Eyre on behalf of all the parties on the city council regarding the financial arrangements for the race?

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer—the auditors demanded it. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and his hon. Friends continue to oppose the Bill, the amendments will not be incorporated in the Bill in time for this year's race. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether any of them can be incorporated if the proceedings are delayed unreasonably. I am certain that that is the hon. Gentleman's intention.

Mr. Davis: If the hon. Gentleman intends to follow the line adopted by his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and blame the auditors for the city council's failure to observe the assurances that were given, will he deal with a point made in a letter from Price Waterhouse, which the hon. Member for Northfield partially quoted on Second Reading? The auditors said:

"The statement . . . is not correct."—

that is, that the assurance should be broken and the preamble used to justify the subsidy. One must also take note of what I said on Second Reading—which has not been denied—that I received a message from Price Waterhouse to the effect that

"Price Waterhouse give advice to the city as well as audit the city as they do with all their clients."

The message then said:

"I am pretty certain that I did not suggest . . . that the preamble of the 1985 Act should be used to justify this credit to the road race account."—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 268.]

The city auditor, apart from saying that he did not instruct the city council, also says that he does not think that he even suggested it.

Mr. Bevan: That was one of the main causes for reconsideration. The Bill has been commented on in detail and the amendments have been incorporated in the Bill.

Reference was made to the socio-economic disbenefit for lorries. The benefits for the citizens of Birmingham are beginning to become clear. The Bill has a great part to play in making the city's name known widely throughout the world. It would encourage substantial numbers of tourists to visit the city. Tourists bring about £1 billion to the west midlands each year. The Bill's provisions would bring more tourists to the city. We need to attract people to Birmingham in the most reasonable way that can be found. Birmingham is fast becoming one of the most attractive cities in Europe. It is well sited and is earning substantial sums of money for the city because people wish to visit it.

It would be wrong to impede the progress of the Bill when it is clear that the vast majority of the people of Birmingham want it to become law. The city council, with all-party support, wants the Bill. Local business wants the

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race. The media want the race. Both ITV and the BBC will cover the event this year. The opponents of the race and of the Bill are a small minority.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman has referred to all those who, he says, wants the Bill. Why, therefore, do the media not pay for it? Both the press and television have a vested interest in the race. It is an event. The media exist to report events and to cream off advertising from them, so why should the poll tax payers of Birmingham fund an event for the media? The hon. Gentleman must see the other side of the argument. I have no interest to declare other than as a Member of Parliament representing people who support and oppose the Bill, but I am determined to ensure that the idea that the poll tax payers should subsidise the road race is a non-starter.

The House provided the power to run the race for five years so long as it did not make a loss. That is the nub of the issue. With all due respect to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan), in about four attempts he did not say whether he agreed with that proviso. Does he agree that the race should break even over eight years or the power be lost? By his silence he is saying that the council decides, for ever more and at whatever expense, that a media event can be foisted on the citizens of Birmingham who will have to pay for it.

Mr. Bevan: That is absolute nonsense, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. I remind him that the Bill was promoted by a council of his own political complexion, with a Labour majority, as was the original Bill. The Labour council decided that an organisation within the city council or promoted as a result of the city council should be responsible for the running and promotion of the Bill. It was not the concept of my party; had it fallen to us to promote it, it might well have been promoted within the private sector, but it is not and I plead with the hon. Gentleman not to impede those who seek to promote the Bill on behalf of the majority within the city but to allow them to get on with the job.

8.41 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The most generous thing that I can say about the speech by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) is that he has not attended in detail to the provisions of this Bill, the previous Bill or the matters we are discussing. He denied that it was suggested that the race should take place at whatever expense, yet we know that the framework in the previous Bill to control expense—which has been breached and is a cause of great anger to me and my hon. Friends—has been wiped out in the Bill that we are considering today.

The Bill gives powers to run a four-day event at whatever expense with no control and no constraint whatever. That is the case whether the hon. Gentleman likes it or not. Oddly, having told us how all shades of public opinion support the race, he went on to say that the Bill is being promoted by a Labour council. It is true that Labour is in control of the city of Birmingham as the people of Birmingham were wise enough to appreciate that they would get better care and support from a Labour council than from any other. However, the Bill has support and dissent from both parties on the city council. The hon. Gentleman should admit that. Recently the leader of the Tory group on the city council has started expressing doubts in the local papers. That is probably because the tide of public opinion is moving well away from the Bill. He is starting to say that perhaps the road race should be reconsidered; perhaps it should not be funded by the council but handed over to a private company. I know that only because it has appeared in local papers on a number of occasions.

The hon. Member for Yardley pretended that that was the position adopted by Conservative members of Birmingham city council throughout. That is simply false; it is a new idea. His colleagues on Birmingham city council were wise enough to pick up the fact that public opinion is rapidly moving against the race and are beginning to think about whether it would be better run by a private company. That is an interesting argument. Had a private company attempted to run the race, it would have closed down long ago as the race cannot even cover its costs let alone make a profit.

The hon. Gentleman used an argument about the race that has been used a number of times—that it gives glory to Birmingham throughout the world. That argument makes me squirm. I am proud of my city. The industrial revolution started in Birmingham and the first factories developed in Factory road in the Ladywood constituency. Certainly the city council has not erected any memorial to those enormous events. The steam engine was adapted for use commercially and in manufacturing and that helped to develop the industrial revolution. All those things happened in Birmingham. Birmingham is the second city of Britain; it has an enormous pride and a history of which we could boast throughout the world.

Yet here we have a two-day race taking place in the middle of the city around a residential area. It is deeply unpopular with the people who live there, it disrupts traffic going in and out of the city for weeks on either side of the race and it cannot cover the costs. The hon. Gentleman thinks so little of our city that he thinks that that would give it any glory—running a two-day race that cannot cover its costs. Most people in Birmingham know it is a joke, but the hon. Gentleman appears not to realise that.

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Lady has been associated with Birmingham for much less time than I have. During my entire life which has been spent in Birmingham I have admired and helped my city in whatever way I could. I concede, and I should have thought that the hon. Lady would concede, that the race can make the city attractive in another way, adding to tourism and increasing its income. If she cannot, she has a terrible blind spot.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman has made a very grave allegation against me—he has accused me of being younger than he is. I do not know whether I should apologise for the fact that I have been associated with Birmingham for a shorter time than the hon. Gentleman, assuming that the hon. Gentleman was born and grew up in Birmingham.

Mr. Bevan: I was born and bred in Birmingham.

Ms. Short: So was I. The only reason I have been associated with Birmingham for a shorter time than the hon. Gentleman is that I am not quite as old as he is.

Mr. Bevan: That is right; she should be pleased.

Ms. Short: That does not make for a very interesting debate, although we should consider at what point one's contribution to the city might decline with age.

The hon. Gentleman said that ITV and the BBC intend to cover the race this year. That is interesting, because last year there was a real danger that Central was not going to cover the race. It was such a failure it was not thought to be worthwhile and some financial arrangements were made to induce Central to televise the race, such was its fame and glory throughout the world.

The Bill should not be considered further. I was disappointed at the outcome of its consideration in Committee. It is a widely held view that the private Bill procedure in the House needs to be reviewed as it is deeply unsatisfactory. When a public Bill is considered in Committee, we seek to put on the Committee those hon. Members who have spoken on Second Reading and have some knowledge of and interest and expertise in the matters contained in the Bill because the Committee stage is about scrutiny of detail and one wants interested people who bring some expertise to the Committee. On private Bills we require hon. Members who know absolutely nothing about the subject matter or the area concerned to sit on a Committee to consider the Bill in detail. That is an extremely bad procedure which is increasingly widely criticised and is exemplified by the Committee stage of this Bill.

I would not criticise any individual hon. Members who served on that Committee, but if I were to have to consider some affair involving the people of Mansfield, for example, I would consider myself in a poor position to do so as I have no continuing relationship with the people of Mansfield and would not be able to take their views into account. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) did the best job he could in Committee, but the procedures of the House and the requirement that hon. Members considering private Bills in Committee should have no contact with the area or the subject matter of the Bill mean that inevitably the quality of that consideration will be limited.

I am disappointed with the outcome of the Committee stage. It led to recommendations on how the race would be better run and on how residents would be more sensitively considered, of which I approve. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has accepted those undertakings on behalf of the promoters, but the legislative requirements of the previous Bill have not been complied with. Matters such as the noise of erecting barriers are of enormous importance to local residents. All the rules that were laid down have been breached. People have been kept up all night by horrendous noise days before the race is due to take place.

Given that the legal requirements of the previous Bill were breached, I am sad to say that I do not feel comforted or assured that the undertakings recommended by the Committee will be complied with. I am sure that the hon. Member for Northfield said in good faith that they will be, but I have no confidence that that will happen.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Through her, I should like to make a point to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). He put on the record the undertakings given by the promoters in the full knowledge that Sir Reginald Eyre did the same on the previous Bill. Is he certain that he is not being used? If Sir Reginald Eyre were able to participate in our proceedings, it would be interesting to see how he would react to the previous undertakings not being complied with. This is a serious matter—it certainly is not something we should take lightly. I hope that the hon. Member for Northfield will not take it lightly, because he will have to live with its consequences.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is right. If we return to this matter because the city council wants to extend its powers in the future—given its track record, it may wish to do so—the odds are that the hon. Member for Northfield will no longer be a Member of Parliament. He may therefore end up in exactly the same position as Sir Reginald Eyre, who in good faith said, "It is not my wish or the wish of the promoters of the Bill that it should cost the ratepayers of Birmingham a penny." I believed that undertaking and thought that my hon. Friends and I had done a good job in improving the Bill. I am shocked that the undertakings that he gave were meaningless and have been so deeply breached.

Mr. Roger King: The hon. Lady will agree that setting up the super prix, with all the engineering work, public relations and infrastructure required for such an event, requires quite a learning curve, to use modern jargon. The city has done its level best to stage the event with the minimum of inconvenience to the local community. There is no doubt that there has been inconvenience. There has been a race around Monaco for 40 years, and the authorities probably got it right many years ago, but what the city council has done in a short time is creditworthy.

It is accepted that, in the light of experience, some changes are necessary. I spoke with our former colleague, Sir Reginald Eyre, on Thursday evening. He endorsed the necessity and urgency of the race for Birmingham's Heartlands and for the other areas of the city that need redevelopment. He said, "It is true that we have learned from experience." That is why we brought forward the Bill and why the city has given commitments on the conduct of the race. I do not run the motor race or supervise the work force; that is the job of city officers, who are accountable to city councillors and hon. Members. I understand from their communications with me that they intend to use their best endeavours to carry out to the letter the requirements stipulated in the Bill.

Ms. Short: Officials of Birmingham city council are not accountable to hon. Members. I am sure that the hon. Member for Northfield gave that undertaking in good faith, but officials will not be accountable to him, unless, when he loses his seat, he stands for election to Birmingham city council and makes them accountable and pursues any breach of the undertakings.

My hon. Friends and I accept that there is a learning curve, which is why we were keen, when setting the original structure for financial accountability, not to require the race to break even in the first or second year. A new event takes time to get going, which is why we thought that five years would provide sufficient evidence of whether it would work. Experience so far shows that it cannot cover its costs.

I visited my constituents during last year's race and experienced the horrendous noise of it. Despite the council saying that it would tackle the problems of the erection of barriers and the inconvenience to local people, my constituents believe that there has been no improvement,

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that the race is outrageous and that the council does not bother to listen to local people. Simple things could be done that would lessen the irritation of the race.

The hon. Member for Northfield mentioned Sir Reginald Eyre, whom I see occasionally on trains between London and Birmingham. He is not present to give his views, but he originally said that the race should not cost the ratepayers of Birmingham anything. He did not say, "But they will not mind paying £500,000 a year for so-called advertising." The undertakings that he gave have been breached. The hon. Member for Northfield reported him as saying that the race is essential for the future of Heartlands. I find that an improbable statement for him to make, and when I next see him I shall ask whether he made it.

Mr. Terry Davis: Sir Reginald Eyre's name has been bandied about and was raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) may like to know that I have discussed the race with Sir Reginald Eyre. If I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall give testimony contrary to that given by the hon. Member for Northfield.

I intervened on my hon. Friend's factual speech to remind her of two points. First, she rightly said that we did not ask the council to make a profit or to break even within a year or two, but it said that it would do so within three years. My hon. Friends and I wanted to be generous. We said, "You may miss your target by £10, £15, £100 or £500, and we should not want you to be compelled, for such a small amount of money, to stop the road race. Let us make it five years, which will be plenty of time." It said, "Thank you very much. That is very generous, constructive and helpful." We were trying to help the city council. Sir Reginald Eyre at least appreciated that point.

Secondly, my hon. Friend said that the city council and Sir Reginald Eyre stated that there had been an improvement. One other person said that adding clause 14 to the Bill was a big improvement—the hon. Member for Northfield, who said so on local radio.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he spoke, I remembered that we started with a three-year break-even point. I remember the fantastic figures announced when the Bill was first suggested—the number of people who would watch the race, the amount of money that would be made—and the suggestions that the race would fund improvements to all the rotten housing stock in which many of my constituents live. It was going to be the most profitable operation that had ever been heard of.

We did not want to be unhelpful, but we were sceptical about some of the leaflets, projections, public relations exercises and hype—which, no doubt, cost a lot of money. We could have tabled an amendment to hold the council to its projections on the profitability of the road race, but we asked only that it cover its costs, and it has not done so. That is a damning indictment of the Bill.

I explained why the Committee proceedings on private Members' Bills were deeply unsatisfactory and why we needed to review the procedures. I said that, although the undertakings recommended by the Committee and accepted by the Bill's promoters were in themselves worthy, I was not confident that they would be complied with, given our experience of the first Bill and the fact that the legal requirements were not met.

The Committee stage was a deep disappointment also because the Committee failed to consider the costs of the race. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) will say something about those matters. The disappointment and anger of my colleagues and people in Birmingham go beyond the people of Ladywood, who are annoyed about the disruption to their lives on a personal level. There is concern about the lack of a firm programme of financial control for the race.

Returning to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), under an amendment to the first Bill, the powers to run the race were to lapse if it did not cover its costs in five years. That amendment was welcomed by everyone. Everyone—including the hon. Member for Northfield on radio—said that it showed that the procedures were helpful and good, that it was a better Bill and that they wanted those financial constraints. If it was such a good amendment, why was it not incorporated in the second Bill? Why is there no framework under which the race has to break even and cover its costs or the power to run the race will lapse?

I am sorry to say this, but it must be put on the record. An offer was made to us: "Drop the opposition and we will give you a financial constraint. If you will not agree to shut up, let the Bill proceed and not raise any other points, we will not give you a financial constraint." That is the wrong way to do business. It is a matter not just of the disruption that will be caused to the people living in the area, especially those in Ladywood. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, it is a plug hole. The fact that it costs too much for the people of Birmingham is of concern to all the people of Birmingham.

The people of Birmingham will soon have to pay far too much in poll tax because of the Government's duplicity in setting a figure that cannot be reached anywhere in the country, except where they make special arrangements—funny places such as Westminster. The Government try to pretend that it is the fault of Birmingham city council that the poll tax has been set at £400, but the same thing is happening throughout the country in many Tory areas where councils cannot meet the Government's poll tax projections.

The Committee stage was a grave disappointment because of its failure to deal with the costs of the road race, the inaccuracy of the accounts and the way in which the intentions behind clause 14 had been undermined. For those reasons alone, the Bill should not be further considered. In responding to the speech of the hon. Member for Yardley, I said that opinion in Birmingham was moving firmly against the race. I have a few cuttings of letters to local newspapers that provide evidence. In a letter written on 15 February—my birthday, as a matter of fact—Mrs. Iris Worsley of Goodge street, Highgate asks:

> "Can Sir Richard Knowles tell me and all Birmingham Poll Tax payers what percentage of the £406 per head he intends to waste again on this year's Super Prix?"

It is interesting to note that the sponsor of the Bill failed to answer that question. The people of Birmingham will be

interested to hear that answer. The hon. Member for Northfield tells us that it will cost each and every one of them £1, but we shall have to examine the poll tax figure.

A letter appeared in the *Birmingham Evening Mail* on 13 February 1990 from Mrs. J. I. Holborn of Grosvenor road in Harborne, who is also concerned about the community charge:

"The Super Prix must be abandoned".

That was one of her recommendations for reducing the community charge. Another interesting letter appeared in the *Birmingham Evening Mail* on 31 January 1990. It was from Dr. B. S. Smith FRCP, consultant physician, and it concerned the threat to the general hospital in Birmingham. Everyone from Birmingham knows that that matter causes great concern and gives rise to intense passion—perhaps even more than the super prix. Dr. Smith wrote to defend Sir James Ackers and felt that much of the criticism had been unfair. Hon. Members may remember the letter. It was extremely unusual to find such a letter among all the letters from Birmingham residents who passionately wanted the hospital to be kept——

Mr. Bevan: It was one of four.

Ms. Short: The hon. Member for Yardley seems to have added up the letters in support of the plans for the general hospital and says that there were four. Although Dr. Smith was out of line with public opinion on the matter of that hospital, he said in his letter:

"There is a certain irony that the City Fathers can organise an event which blocks off the Bristol Road for several days —merely so that a few vehicles can travel round and round in circles at high speed. Yet, the same establishment cannot provide year round convenient and rapid access via the Bristol Road (or some alternative route) to the Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth sites."

Clearly Dr. Smith thinks that the road race is a bit of a joke and he suggests that the city fathers might do better to organise transport systems to the Queen Elizabeth hospital. I do not know about the hon. Member for Northfield, but I know that most Birmingham Members would disagree with Dr. Smith, and would wish to retain the general hospital, although we would wish it to be refurbished and would be willing to consider parts of it being put to different use.

Mr. Bevan: I must agree with the hon. Lady. I wish —as she obviously does—to see the general hospital retained, as a hospital within the medical orbit of the city of Birmingham.

Ms. Short: It is nice to know that the hon. Gentleman and I agree on something.

I was referring to the tide of public opinion and to recent letters in the local press. In the *Birmingham Post* on Friday 17 November appeared a letter from Ruth M. Naish of Constance road, Birmingham 5. She said that she agreed with my hon. Friends the Members for Perry Barr and for Hodge Hill and me about the road race and said that she had been angered by the comment made by Reg Hales of Four Oaks, who had apparently said that we should stop our "carping and moaning". That rather elegant phrase was aimed at my hon. Friends and me.

Ruth M. Naish writes of Reg Hales:

"What does he know about it? His consituents live far enough away from the track of the road race to have any conception of the feeling there is against it by those of us who live on my side of the city (Birmingham 5) though of course, all Birmingham residents will be forced to pay for it, directly or indirectly. I can't help wondering how many of the 152 MPs who voted for the Super Prix know anyone who lives in South Birmingham, let alone live there themselves. What right do they have to legislate for our lives?"

That is something of an answer to the hon. Member for Northfield who boasted about the number of hon. Members who voted for the Bill on Second Reading. It is interesting to examine who voted for the Bill on Second Reading. It was quite obvious from the vote that the Government had a formal arrangement to ensure that the Bill was carried—that there was a closure and that there were at least 100 supporters here. For example, a number of Ministers voted and, as I said last time I spoke, the Chief Whip came into the Chamber while the hon. Member for Northfield was on his feet and his speech was abruptly curtailed. It was obvious that informally the Government were organising the vote to pass the road race Bill. Given that that was the case, it is misleading to claim that hon. Members who voted in its favour had listened to the arguments and were persuaded that the race was good for Birmingham, rather than that there was some hackish organisation of the vote for whatever questionable reasons by the Tory leadership.

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Lady should know that it is not just her female perspicacity that enabled her alone to recognise instantly what the Chief Whip was up to. It was obvious to everybody. I was asked to conclude quickly to allow another Labour Member to speak as that was essential. That gesture allowed the hon. Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) to speak. Those who voted for the Bill are well aware of the views of the people in the south of Birmingham. I can guarantee that they are overwhelmingly in favour of the race. Reg Hales lives in the very road next to the park through which the RAC rally goes through Sutton Coldfield. We watch it when it is in Sutton park.

Ms. Short: That is extremely interesting, but Ruth M. Naish is not talking about the RAC rally. I do not have a view about the RAC rally that goes through Sutton park. I am not aware of its existence. We are not discussing that today. The fact that Reg Hales goes to the RAC rally is neither here nor there.

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Lady said that Reg Hales knew nothing about car racing. He has racing next to his road in the local park.

Ms. Short: I am sorry, but that is not what I said. I shall quote again from the letter of Ruth M. Naish because she should not be misrepresented. She said of Reg Hales:

"What does he know about it? His constituents live far enough away from the track of the road race to have any conception of the feeling there is against it by those of us who live on my side of the city (Birmingham 5) though of course, all Birmingham residents will be forced to pay for it, directly or indirectly."

She did not say and I would not dream of saying that Reg Hales knows nothing about road racing. I am well aware that the hon. Member for Northfield is keen on it. That makes his motive for promoting the Bill questionable. It is his hobby. Fine. He enjoys it and spends his time on it. Fine. He is trying to inflict on my constituents this wretched, expensive, disruptive race so that he and his friends can take pleasure at the expense of my constituents. For all I know, Reg Hales may go with the hon. Gentleman to every racing event. That is not in question, but what is in question is that he lives a long way

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from the track. Ruth M. Naish is saying that it is clear from what he says that Reg Hales has no concept of how the people who live near the track feel about it.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Because of our procedures on these Bills, few hon. Members know anything about the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) criticised the Committee, but at least it visited the area. I could not go on the visit but I went later, walked round the area and formed my opinion. Hon. Members who come from Birmingham understand the area and one or two hon. Members may have been to the road race and formed attitudes from that experience. Otherwise, we are very much in the dark and are acting on the myth that hon. Members have poured over the Committee's report on its detailed investigations. There is something problematic about our procedures. The House should have at least sufficient hon. Members present to consider the points that are raised on behalf of constituents in the area whose daily lives will be affected by the Bill.

Ms. Short: When I criticised the outcome of the Committee stage, and said that I did not think that the Bill should be given time for further consideration, I should have made it clear that it was a criticism not of the individuals concerned, who did the best job that they could, but of the procedures of the House for dealing with private Bills. The requirement that people who have no connection with the area concerned should deal with the Bill is nonsense. The Committee stage and the good work of the individuals concerned is blemished by the broad structures within which they have to work.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Under our present procedures, however conscientious people are, and even though they may miss some procedural tricks, it is a case of the blind leading the blind. We need different procedures to ensure that investigations take place in the Birmingham area and that account is taken of the views expressed.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is a mounting feeling among those who organise the business of the House that private Bill procedures are becoming intolerable. We must re-examine those procedures and introduce better organisation.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is quite right. I looked today at the Standing Orders for private business, which are twice the size of the Standing Orders for public business. It is ludicrous that Birmingham Members were prevented from participating in the Committee stage. It is a throwback. Private Bills used to relate only to the building of roads and canals. At that time, hon. Members were up to their necks in financial interests, and they were rightly prevented from participating in the Committee stages. We have no vested interest whatsoever. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has a vested interest—it may not be financial—yet he can sponsor the Bill on behalf of its promoters. That is a paradox in itself.

I will make one further point concerning what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said about the Second Reading of the Bill. Let us not beat about the bush. If my memory serves me correctly, you were in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on 18 April. Of course, we do not hear private conversations, but the only reason that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) was told to sit down and let me speak for seven minutes was that the occupant of the Chair—I can put myself in his position—had made it clear that he would not accept a closure motion unless an alternative view was put. On reflection, it was stupid of me to speak. The hon. Member for Yardley gave way only so that I could have a few minutes to satisfy the balance of the argument, and then the closure was accepted. The only reason that happened was that the hon. Gentleman had a visit from his Chief Whip.

Ms. Short: It is a strong convention that we never say on the Floor of the House what we have been told in informal discussions with the Chair.

My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr was generous when he praised the way that the hon. Member for Northfield had ably promoted the Bill. The hon. Member for Northfield spoke at some length on that occasion and that called into question whether a closure would be granted, because of the unbalance that it caused in the debate. Some smart footwork had to be done. There was a change of mind about whether a closure should be granted by some of the powers that be, and that might be related to the hon. Member for Yardley having his speech foreshortened. I will never forget the way that he virtually fell on the floor when his Chief Whip moved up the stairs in the middle of the Gangway, before he had even heard what the message was. That tells us something about the modern-day Conservative party and the degree of democracy and consultation with which it works. That incident is imprinted on my brain as a little cameo which I will never forget.

I shall refer to recent letters that appeared in the local press about the super prix, which demonstrate a swell of opinion away from that race. The biggest measure of that change is the shift of opinion by the Conservative party and its leadership on the city council. On this matter, unlike so many others, it seems able to read the tide of public opinion. The Government may have had that skill at one time, but they have lost it in recent months.

The *Birmingham Evening Mail* of Friday 17 November included a letter by Hugh H. Williams of Birmingham 31. He said that he gathered that the super prix was being extended, that he was neither for nor against the event, but that he wanted to make a serious suggestion. He wrote:

> "As it is the citizens of this city who underwrite the losses and not Halfords, could we not re-name the event and delete Halfords in the publicity blurb? Why not simply Birmingham Super Prix?"

Mr. Williams knows that it costs money and that the citizens have to pay for it. He does not believe that Halfords should get the credit for the costs to those citizens.

Another letter which appeared on Friday 17 November came from Richard Munro of King's Heath. He said that he was

> "tired of reading about the Super Prix"—

he will be even more tired tomorrow I am afraid.

> "It is a pity the money spent on this expensive and disruptive frivolity was not invested in improving the city's appalling traffic conditions . . . I am also irritated"—

I wonder whether the hon. Members for Northfield and for Yardley recognise the name Richard Munro.

Mr. Roger King: Yes.

Ms. Short: Mr. Munro said in his letter:

"I am also irritated by the impression given by Parliamentary reports that Conservatives favour the Super Prix.

I am the secretary of a Ward Conservative Association and I for one disassociate myself from the Super Prix.

Birmingham has other attractions for visitors and residents which do not cause inconvenience to those living near them."

There seems to be a difference of opinion in all parties on the council about this matter. Local opinion is opposed to the race and across the city the tide of public opinion is increasingly moving against it.

When those who are trying to promote the Bill for the city council are irritated by the criticisms of my hon. Friends the Members for Perry Barr and for Hodge Hill and myself they constantly try to make a distinction between us. They say that they understand why I should be opposed to the race because, by implication, they know that my constituents hate it. They say that they expect me to voice such an opinion, but they find it intolerable that my hon. Friends the Members for Perry Barr and for Hodge Hill should be against the race. By advancing such an argument it is clear that the powers that be in the city council recognise that the race is deeply unpopular with the people who must live with it. They think that it is okay for me to speak against it because they know that I am the representative of those people. That is an intolerable attitude. If the race is unbearable to those who must live with it, it is not good enough. We should not have road races in residential areas. We should not have races that make it impossible for people to hear themselves think, for elderly people to get in and out to do their shopping or to be visited by their relatives.

People who want to go to the races should attend purpose-built tracks. The hon. Member for Northfield knows better than I where such tracks can be found. I believe that on the grounds of safety, efficiency and disruption, races should take place on such tracks. There is no question but that the existing race causes enormous disruption and noise to the local people.

Mr. Rooker: I want to reinforce what my hon. Friend has said about the almost subliminal attempt to separate the two representatives of the northern, outer-city suburbs from my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) who represents the other side of the city centre. It is disingenuous to suggest that the road has nothing to do with my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill and me. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is at one with us about the Bill, but, because of his other duties, he is unable to participate in our debate.

When we started to deploy the financial argument the look of horror on the face of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)—I regret that she has left the Chamber, but this is not an attack on her—was telling. She also has constituents who are involved. There is evidence from some reports that I have read that she has started seriously to question the financial arrangements of the race. *[Interruption.]* It is no good the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) shaking his head. I could see the hon. Lady's face and he could not. It reflected the horror as the financial effects started to dawn on Conservatives Members who, by and large, with the exception of the two who are in the Chamber, have not studied the matter.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is right. I should like to make it clear that I think that all decent democrats should seriously take account of the views of the people who live in the area where the race is run. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and I oppose the race because our two constituencies are affected by it. Given the political sub-alliances across the Birmingham, it may be a slight surprise that the leader of the Labour group on the city council is on one side of the argument and my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook is on the other. It is notable that the Members of Parliament representing the two constituencies in which the race was run are opposed to the race. All good democrats should listen to them and the people who live in those two constituencies and around the road race.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hodge Hill and for Perry Barr are to be congratulated on listening to and caring about the views of people whose lives are disrupted by the road race. Members of Parliament for other areas of the city should have more respect for local people.

Mr. Corbett: I know that my hon. Friend will not want this both ways. A few moments ago she was saying that any of us, as Members of Parliament in the city, have the right to take a view on the road race, whether we and our constituents are near to or a long way from the track. She keeps asserting that the majority of the people in her constituency and, perhaps by implication, in the city go to the road race. Is she also aware that at least one opinion poll showed that the road race enjoys popular support? That does not do away with the objectors, but it shows that the majority of the citizens of Birmingham are in favour of the road race.

Ms. Short: I am aware of the polling and we discussed it earlier today—perhaps my hon. Friend was not here. The result of the last poll was not sent to all of us. However, following a reference to it by the hon. Member for Yardley during, I think, the debate on Second Reading, I wrote to the leader of the city council and obtained copies of the poll results. My hon. Friend the Member for Erdington will know that, with all polls, it is possible to construct samples and questions to produce different results so that any one poll is not necessarily absolute evidence of the opinion of people, particularly those living locally who are affected by the race.

Speaking from memory, the last poll that I saw, and which was referred to in the House, showed that nearly half of those questioned thought that the four-day event should not be supported. Therefore, the polling evidence available—it is difficult because we do not have it in front of us—shows that there is declining support for the race among local people.

Of course, it is the right of hon. Members to take a view on the road race. Just as it is my right to oppose it, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) has a right to support it. I would not question that for a moment. However, I was trying to deal with the suggestion that has been made repeatedly that it is reasonable and democratic for me to oppose it because its promoters realise that it is deeply unpopular among the people who live around the track, but it is not all right for other Birmingham Members to oppose it because they do not represent the people who are directly affected by it. That seems to be a deeply undemocratic argument. Those

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representing people who do not live close to an event should respect the views of those who live close to it. That is an important part of the democratic process.

Another point made in one of the letters that I read out earlier is that the financial cost is a matter for every single ratepayer, poll tax payer and citizen of Birmingham. It is the duty of every Member of Parliament in Birmingham to take the finances seriously. We all have exactly the same interest in that, regardless of the area that we represent.

Next I turn to the unpopularity of the race among local residents because of the disruption that it causes. I went to the race for the first time last year. I did not partake of the hospitality, nor did I sit in the grandstand, but I visited a number of my constituents who live in the area. The noise was unbearable. People were going around with machines to measure the noise—on behalf of the city council and on behalf of informal groups. It is strange that the findings of that monitoring have not been made available to us. Even with the windows closed the noise exceeded recommended industrial safety levels. It was very intense, if only for short periods.

Mr. Harry Barnes: When my hon. Friend visited constituents in the area of the track, was she able, as a Member of Parliament, to go straight through, or did she require a pass to get into the central area—as the people who live in that area required?

Ms. Short: I needed a pass; the whole area is fenced off, like a prison camp. One cannot enter without a pass. We were all sent letters asking whether we wanted to go and whether we wanted passes to get into the road races. I received a pass because I had promised months before to visit my constituents.

One of the constituents whom I visited that day had been taken ill the day before and his doctor had not been allowed in because he did not have an appropriate pass. Supposedly, proper arrangements had been made, but the doctor had been turned away and had to return later. By the time my constituent got his prescription he was quite ill.

These are serious issues. In another of the houses that I visited that day there lived a young man whose job it was to be on call to go and repair cars, but he was not allowed to bring his car in and out of the area. Residents are supposed to be able to drive into certain roads, and he had to choose whether to park his car outside the fence where it was in danger of being vandalised by strangers who perhaps, had had too much to drink, or to keep it inside and face the consequent difficulties when he was called out. These inconveniences do not amount to much singly, but they become exasperating for residents in the circumstances that I have described.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The point that my hon. Friend is making is well illustrated by the fact that the elected representative of the people of the area could not get in without a pass, which seems monstrous.

Ms. Short: I do not tend to stand on ceremony—as long as I could get in, that was all right by me. It was interesting, however, that the people staffing the gates did not know the local residents. We were promised, with the original Bill, that large numbers of jobs would be provided for local people, but the people employed on the gates knew no one. I do not know who they were, but they were certainly not locals.

The present two-day race causes terrible noise and disruption; a four-day event would be unthinkable. That is another major reason why the Bill should not be further considered. The case for a four-day event is being argued with local people with a certain duplicity on the subject of whether it is likely to turn into a grand prix. A four-day event would be bad enough but a grand prix would be horrendous. There would be a great deal of noise. It is a different formula and the highest formula race is incredibly noisy and hurts the ears. Advice is given now that children should have their ears protected and a grand prix would be much more noisy than previous races.

When local people object to the potential noise and disruption of a four-day event they are told that there is no chance of a grand prix. It is said that, although it has been talked about, the track is not big enough and neither are the pits, which is what I think they are called. On the other side of the argument people try to project the level of fame and glory and the amount of tourist revenue that such a race would bring to Birmingham. In other locations the argument is advanced, as it has been advanced in the debate by the hon. Member for Northfield, that the aim is to get the grand prix.

The Bill should cease to be considered right now, because a grand prix being staged along the end of people's gardens close to their windows is an intolerable concept. No one who has been in those houses and has listened to the noise would dare to vote for it.

Mr. Rooker: I am open to challenge about what I said earlier. This circuit would be of no use for a grand prix. For a start people could not be accommodated around the circuit. If every available area was blocked off for spectators, all the people who wanted to see the race could still not be accommodated because it is not possible to erect grandstands on most of the circuit. It is beyond reasonableness to use this circuit for a serious grand prix on the world scale. All the other city grand prix circuits are not like the one in Birmingham. The grand prix in Adelaide, Australia and in Monaco have a lie of the land, access to the circuit and spectator accommodation utterly different from the circuit presently used in inner-city Birmingham. Such a race would require a totally different circuit. Conservative Members may shake their heads, but they should go to the circuit and have a look to see where spectators could be accommodated.

Mr. Bevan *rose*—

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman cannot intervene on me because I am intervening on my hon. Friend.

Ms. Short: I shall reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr and then I shall be happy to allow the hon. Member for Yardley to make his point.

I am not an expert on motor racing. I am happy to say that I have not wasted many hours of my life attending races. I went once in my youth and thought how silly it was to stand by the side of the road and see some cars go by very fast and then wait for a few minutes to see it all happen again. It seems a silly activity to me. However, I am happy that people such as the hon. Member for Northfield should engage in such a silly activity. If it gives him pleasure good luck to him, provided he pays for it

himself and does not require my constituents, who will have great difficulty in paying the poll tax, to pay for his hobbies and provided it does not disrupt people who do not want to be there. That is what is so unbearable about running the race around the houses of people who do not choose to be there. It is all right if the hon. Member for Northfields pays for his ticket and spends his Sunday afternoon following this rather silly hobby. That is fair enough, but it is not fair to impose it on my constituents.

I can claim some expertise. Last year when I was there there was a motor sport television team making some kind of programme about the race. A man interviewed me, but he did not know much about road racing, although the people who run such programmes generally do. He said that he thought it was extremely exciting because of the noise and because it was on ordinary streets. That was the good part. However, he said that the circuit was rotten because there was so few points from which one could see much of the race. He said, "There is no chance of it going much further. The excitement comes from having a race on ordinary streets and the noise and the smell." Apparently those are the things that turn on the aficionados, but he said that this was a rotten, useless circuit because it had so few vantage points. I cannot claim to make that point with authority but this expert who makes television programmes about such matters told me that.

Mr. Bevan: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way and I am glad that she has reached a breach in the sentence. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned Monaco. That is an extraordinarily restricted circuit. It is much more restricted than Birmingham, the race is on much narrower streets and there is much less capability of erecting stands. So let us get it right: if permission were granted, the present circuit could well meet any requirements that might be imposed.

The hon. Lady is quite wrong in attributing to herself superiority of philosophical definition in suggesting that everybody who follows motor racing is childish. Millions of people in this country follow motor racing, and in the city of Birmingham there are many, many thousands who want to follow it. Indeed, they are in the majority. It is just as wrong for the hon. Lady to suggest otherwise as it was for the hon. Member for Perry Barr to suggest that there was a look of horror on the face of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) when she listened to the financial horrors that he said were unfolding. My hon. Friend's expression was just as seraphic as it had been during "Songs of Praise" yesterday.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman suggests that, somehow, I am insulting people who enjoy road racing. Actually, I am very pleased that people are different. People engage in all sorts of extraordinary hobbies. Not one of us engages in all of them, and some of us do not understand why the activities in which some people engage on a Sunday afternoon could possibly be enjoyable. But some people enjoy watching road racing. I think that it is extraordinary that people should want to spend their time doing that. I tried it once. I saw cars going by very fast, then it was very boring for a moment, and then the cars went by very fast again. To me, road racing is not interesting or enjoyable, but the hon. Member for Northfield can enjoy it if he wishes. Of course he can, but he should pay for it himself, and he should not disrupt people who do not want to have road racing in their area.

Mr. Corbett: Is my hon. Friend saying that, even if the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker)—the amendment on the financial side—were acceptable, even if the money aspect were put right and were acceptable to the city council, she still would not want any form of racing, any day of the year, anywhere near her constituency?

Ms. Short: No. I have made it clear previously that I think that there is a majority for a two-day event. This is the problem. Some of my constituents are passionately hostile to the whole thing and wish that racing had never been held in Birmingham. Some people have always been opposed to it, whereas others, having experienced it, have become deeply opposed to it. A poll of local residents has shown that there is a majority in favour of a two-day event, but overwhelming opposition to a four-day event.

I am most anxious that this Bill should be defeated. I say to the hon. Member for Yardley that it is completely honourable to use the procedures of the House, including the possibility of having the Bill amended. If that causes the Bill to fall, I shall be overjoyed. That is my intention. It would be in the interests of the people of Birmingham, including my constituents. If it does fall, there will still be legal power for the running of a two-day race in Birmingham. In my opinion, there should be financial constraints in respect of the two-day race. That would be the best framework for road racing in Birmingham—if it is to be held there at all.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The thing that is particularly obnoxious about the suggestion that there should be a grand prix, lasting four days, instead of a super prix is that it would be a moveable feast. It could be held at any time, including holiday periods. In the case of a two-day or three-day event during a holiday period, people, at least theoretically, have an opportunity to get away from the area. However, during a working period, and especially when the event includes a Friday and a Monday, they have no opportunity to get away, so their lives, as well as the commercial life of the area, with which many of them are associated, are disrupted completely.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is a point on which I have not yet touched, but it is one of great importance. Why power has to be taken to organise racing on any occasion, not including a bank holiday, I really do not know. The disruption implications are dreadful.

I am most anxious to bring my remarks to an end. I tabled an amendment to the effect that the whole event should be moved to Northfield. I am sorry that the amendment was not selected. I should love to know whether the hon. Member for Northfield would have supported it and whether, if he had, it would have been popular with his constituents. If Birmingham people who live elsewhere are in favour of it but would not want it in their own backyards, there is something wrong with it.

Mr. Roger King: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for inviting me to give my views on that matter. I would be quite agreeable to the same procedure as was adopted by the city council—a survey of residents around the proposed circuit to ascertain whether they would welcome the race.

If, as happened when the hon. Lady undertook her original canvass, a substantial number of constituents

[Mr. Roger King]

supported the event, then I would have no objection—bar one. Try as I might, I could not evolve a road system that is as attractive and offers the hotel accommodation that the existing road race circuit offers, which brings dynamic vibration—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—I mean, vibrancy, to the city centre. It is not essential to Birmingham Heartlands—I misquoted Sir Reginald Eyre—but it is beneficial to them and to the city generally.

As to the cost of moving the race, I am at one with the hon. Lady in not wanting another £1 million or £2 million spent on moving the circuit to Northfield. I agree with the hon. Lady that that would be a scandalous waste of everyone's money.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman gives a very clear answer. I understood him to say that he would be in favour of moving the race if a majority were in favour—and that from an hon. Member with a marginal seat. Nevertheless, I am anxious to bring my remarks to a conclusion.

I told my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington of my view. The power to run the two-day event will remain, whatever happens to the Bill. That event has been run for four years, and it has been found that the city is unable to organise it in such a way that its costs were covered. The city has also been unable to organise the race so that it complies with the basic framework of the law. It is laughable to suggest that the House should entertain a Bill to extend the city's powers when it has failed so abysmally in its efforts to run a two-day event.

The Bill should not pass, and I hope that it will not. I hope that we shall return to it again and again, until time runs out. Birmingham can then continue with a two-day event—and when it has proved that it can run that properly, it is entitled to ask for something more. However, my view is that the disruption that a four-day event would cause would be too high a price to pay for the people of Ladywood. A four-day event should be run on a purpose-built track somewhere else in Birmingham, if the city wants to be associated with such an event.

9.46 pm

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): It may be helpful if at this point I intervene briefly to restate the Government's view. I say "briefly" because I know that a number of hon. Members still hope to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As the House knows, the Government traditionally stand neutral in relation to private Bills where no major matter of principle is involved. The Bill before the House is no exception, as was made clear to the House by the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), when he intervened on Second Reading last year. The Bill raises issues which are essentially of local concern and there is no case for the Government to intervene. It is for the promoter to persuade the House that the powers sought are justified. The Unopposed Bills Committee has allowed the measure to proceed with amendments in the usual way, so I hope that the House will allow the Bill to progress.

9.47 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): The Minister's statement was very disappointing. He quoted the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), when he intervened, as the Minister then responsible, in the Second Reading debate in April 1989. If the Minister's officials had given him the benefit of their research and knowledge, he would have known that his right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) made a very different statement during the passage of the Birmingham City Council Act 1985. The Minister smiles, so I assume that he is aware of her words but thought that discretion was the better part of valour and did not want to refer to them. The right hon. Member for Wallasey made it clear on that occasion, not that the Government were neutral, but that they expected the city council to run the road race on a self-financing basis. That has not happened, and that is at the heart of the objections to the Bill by my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself.

I join others of my hon. Friends in regretting the absence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who is to undergo an operation tomorrow, having been admitted to hospital this evening. We all look forward to his quick recovery and to his presence at any future debates on this issue.

I do not presume to speak for my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath. I was amused to learn that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) can apparently see into my right hon. Friend's mind and knows that he would, if he were here, agree with the hon. Member. I do not presume to speak for my right hon. Friend, although I have known him for many years, and can claim to know him rather better than the hon. Member for Yardley.

I accept that my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath, in his inimitable way, supported the Bill on Second Reading, but I believe and suggest to the House that a good reason for not considering the Bill any further would be to allow my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath to be present amongst us. I believe that if he could listen to the arguments of my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) he would have good reason to reconsider his support for the Bill on that occasion—*[Interruption.]* Time is passing, and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has been notable for his absence throughout most of our proceedings this evening, so I think that he owes it to himself to listen to our arguments, especially since—*[Interruption.]* Well, the hon. Gentleman is always absent; that is why we always make that point.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was quoted in the Birmingham newspapers last weekend as saying that he did not understand the objections of the opponents of the Bill. Therefore, I shall give the hon. Member for Northfield a further opportunity to understand our objections.

The hon. Member for Yardley claims that the reason why he gave way and why his speech was suddenly deflated during the Second Reading debate in April 1989 was that he was anxious to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr, and to understand our objections. I regret that within minutes the hon. Member for Yardley was voting on the closure to stop my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr from expressing his objections and explaining why the Bill should not be given a Second Reading.

There are two basic grounds for objecting to the Bill and for arguing that it should not be given further consideration. The first concerns the effect on the residents

who live in the area affected by the race, such as the constituents represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood. The second is the financial argument.

Mr. Bevan: It is true that I wanted to hear the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), but as soon as I heard him I had had enough and that is why I sat down.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Member for Yardley always has a short attention span and has often heard enough very quickly. However, let me return to the objections to the Bill.

I must be fair to the city council, and I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood would at least join me in this tribute to it. It did not seek to prevent her constituents from petitioning, from objecting to the Bill, or from appearing before the Committee—on which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) served—to enable the Committee to hear the reasons for her constituents' passionate objections to the idea that the event should be extended to four days and to the idea of a grand prix. I regret that some other bodies such as the West Midlands passenger transport authority do not take the same attitude and are objecting to the locus standi of residents in similar situations on other Bills, which I shall not discuss this evening because time is pressing, but we will have plenty of opportunity to discuss that on other private Bills during the Session.

Ms. Short: Some of my constituents did petition, but there is cost and difficulty involved for people who wish to petition. The city council tried to prevent someone from petitioning because he was in its employment, and it led to an important matter of privilege coming before the House, so I am afraid—and I am sorry to detract from the compliment that my hon. Friend is paying—that the city council tried to limit the power of people to petition against the Bill.

Mr. Davis: I stand corrected by my hon. Friend. I had forgotten that regrettable incident. Of course, the Select Committee found that the city council was in breach of privilege. However, I think that my hon. Friend will agree that it is interesting that as soon as a complaint was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood on behalf of that member of staff the hon. Member for Northfield, with his knowledge and insight into what goes on in the Labour rooms of the city council, was able to say categorically to the press that it was all nonsense and there was no breach of privilege. He knew; my hon. Friends did not know. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr did not know, but the hon. Member for Northfield has a special line to the people who support the Bill in the city council. The hon. Member for Northfield was able to say categorically that there was no breach of parliamentary privilege, and I have yet to see him withdraw that statement, as I have yet to hear him explain the position on a number of the factors which affect the Bill.

The hon. Member for Yardley—I cannot leave him alone—said—*[Interruption.]* I shall leave the hon. Member for Selly Oak alone because he has not been here long enough, but the hon. Member for Yardley has sat patiently throughout the debate, and he said that the amendments to the Bill accepted in Committee protected the residents of Ladywood in every possible way. Of course, they do not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood has made it clear that she is not satisfied, as have many of her constituents. They are not sufficiently protected: certainly they are not protected in every possible way. If they were, my hon. Friend would not have been able to table so many amendments. One reason why we should not proceed with the Bill is to allow the city council to devote adequate thought to the amendments, no doubt with the advice of the hon. Members for Yardley and for Northfield.

I support the protestations of my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood on behalf of her constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr has already quoted from a letter that I received from a gentleman living in Wheeley's road, Edgbaston. I am not sure whether Wheeley's road is in my hon. Friend's constituency; perhaps it is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who said earlier that she would take up the complaints of one of our correspondents. I hope that she will take up this complaint as well: she may have received it already.

Dame Jill Knight: What I said was that this was the first that I had heard of the matter. No complaint had been made to me about the road race damaging the fabric of school buildings. Had I received such a complaint, I would have been more than ready to take it up.

Mr. Davis: I thought that the hon. Lady went further, and said that she had received no complaints about contractors having failed to clear away dangerous objects —or is she saying that she has received such complaints? I do not wish to misquote her.

Dame Jill Knight: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to misquote me.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Yes, he does.

Dame Jill Knight: No, I do not believe that.

I said to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) exactly what I have just repeated. The hon. Gentleman mentioned a particular incident. I listened carefully to what was said, and I have since checked, but I have received no letter about such matters in my capacity as Member of Parliament for that area.

Mr. Davis: I accept what the hon. Lady says, although I am not sure whether she means that she has had no letters of complaint at all, or no letters from the gentleman whom I mentioned.

Although I was not sure whose constituent the author of the letter was, I feel free to quote from it. It states:

"We live at the City end of Wheeley's Road and hence, are on the fringes of the race area, but like many others are subjected to the full environmental factors and inconvenience which this event brings and were never asked for our opinion, despite the City publicity on polls and soundings among local residents. Road delays spread over many weeks, green areas turned into dirty dumping grounds for concrete and fencing, noise and concern about domestic security at a time when there are many visitors to the area are some of the more obvious drawbacks. The noise and threatening nature of helicopters belonging to the police and television companies over a residential district, are a separate, but equally distressing saga."

I suspect that the same complaint will be made by many people who live in that part of Edgbaston—and, indeed, by many people who live in the relevant parts of Ladywood and Sparkbrook. Hon. Members should note

[Mr. Davis]

that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is also opposed to the Bill in principle.

Although I accept that the hon. Member for Northfield has given his undertakings in good faith, there was nothing to stop the city council from observing many of those undertakings last year. It did not do so, and I question whether it wants to. Our experience of the undertakings given by the council—undertakings given in the House, and enshrined in an amendment drafted by the council—does not encourage us to accept its undertakings in future.

Mr. Roger King *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 75, Noes 24.

Division No. 97] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clelland, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Mans, Keith
Michael, Alun
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sisset, Sir Trevor
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Wallace, James
Wells, Bowen

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Gilroy Bevan and
Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark.

NOES

Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Flynn, Paul
Haynes, Frank
Janner, Greville
Leadbitter, Ted
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Mowlam, Marjorie
Pike, Peter L.
Rooker, Jeff
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Tredinnick, David

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Whereupon MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for closure or for proposal of question).*

It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 1 March.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 16th January, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 16th January, be approved.

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 17th January, be approved.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 17th January, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 17th January, be approved.

That the draft Representation of the People (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 22nd January, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

GENERALISED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES (POLAND, HUNGARY AND KOREA)

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9127/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 14th February 1990 and 9865/89 relating to the Generalised System of Preferences support for Poland and Hungary 9762/89 relating to levies on agricultural products from Poland and Hungary, 10318/87 and 4406/88 relating to the Generalised System of Preferences for South Korea; and supports the Government's agreement to the extension of the European Community's Generalised System of Preferences to Poland and Hungary.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

Midlands Forest

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.11 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am delighted to have the opportunity to place before the House the Countryside Commission's proposal for a new national forest in the midlands and to say how much Leicestershire Members of Parliament, irrespective of party, believe that Leicestershire is the right place for the forest. This is one of the many occasions, which are seldom recognised, when Leicestershire Members of Parliament work and campaign together and I hope that we shall achieve results together.

I wish to say how much my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) regrets that he cannot be present. He has asked me to say how much he supports the campaign and I know that he does so because he is a tremendous worker for his constituents. The placing of the forest in Leicestershire is important to us all.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), in whose constituency the bulk of the forest will be, is present. If he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that he will say that he supports the proposal, as does the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) with whom I have campaigned on many issues affecting our constituents which, like this one, were above party politics.

Unfortunately, because of his reprehensible office, the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) is unable to speak. On this matter, at least it would have been a pleasure to hear him. He indicates, by his smile and posture, that he is on our side.

The Countryside Commission has produced a consultation document entitled, "A new National Forest for the Midlands." It is a great concept for a massive new national forest. The Countryside Commission has suggested five sites. It says that the purpose of the forest is to provide a proper framework of tree planting around which housing and farming and recreation can be developed, to be a major new recreational resource, to offer a way of using farmland that has been marginalised by new farming methods and by the European Economic Community, and to act as a catalyst for economic development. This is a matter of great environmental importance, not least because at a time when acid rain is destroying our forests it offers us a chance to build one.

Why is Leicestershire the most suitable of the five sites? I apply to it the criteria that the Countryside Commission would apply. It is the least treed of all the sites—the most green field of the sites. There is a small forest, Charnwood—small compared with Sherwood—from which the proposed forest would radiate. The region has many old mines and areas which require landscaping. As industries decline, the need for this forest becomes increasingly important. Alas, the traditional industries of Leicestershire are declining—knitwear, hosiery and footwear—and we need the new life that the forest would bring. It is essential if new industry is to be attracted to our county.

The Countryside Commission said that one vital factor in choosing the site would be the willingness of local people to have it. I pay tribute to the stunningly successful woody tree campaign which was run by the *Leicester Mercury* and which evoked 10,000 telephone calls in support one weekend, thousands of letters sent through the post and representations which will be sent on. Schools and individuals in my constituency say that, although the forest will be outside Leicester, it will provide a vital new asset to the city, a new lung and a new resource for the people who live in it.

The Countryside Commission said that there must be support at local level which must be maintained, and I am sure that it will be. The commission said that it will be some 20 years before the first trees show signs of lively growth and perhaps 50 years before there is real progress. I hope that my constituents will be good enough to keep re-electing me so that I will be there to feast and picnic in that forest in 20 years' time, if not in 50. I hope that, with the united phalanx of Leicestershire Members of Parliament—whether they are able to speak in the debate or whether they can only sit and listen and nod—the Countryside Commission will hear what we have to say and recognise that Leicestershire is the right county for this magnificent new forest.

10.17 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) for choosing this subject for an Adjournment debate and for being so courteous to other Leicestershire Members in allowing time for us to speak. As he said, I am the Member perhaps most affected by the proposal for a new forest in the midlands if our area is selected. I need not go through all the arguments so admirably put forward by the hon. and learned Gentleman as to why we should have the forest. I shall concentrate on other matters.

If we are to have the forest, it is right that we should show that we support it locally and that it will be loved, cherished and looked after by local people. The Countryside Commission will consider that criterion in making its choice. We in Leicestershire have shown how much we want the forest and will look after it.

I pay tribute to the magnificent campaign run by the *Leicester Mercury*, informing people and getting the overwhelming support of the local population. The newspaper ran a phone-in and found that 10,000 people were in favour and only 44 against. That speaks for the support that the forest will have in our area.

There is another aspect. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West comes from the city and referred to the delights to which the city dwellers will look forward. The forest will not only offer leisure facilities and attract tourism—it will be a delight for the people of Leicester who we hope will be able to come along the Ivanhoe line from Leicester, stop at a glade in the middle of the forest and picnic there in summer, enjoying the delights and benefits that the forest offers.

I shall not go around demanding that the forest be in north-west Leicestershire, crossing south Derbyshire into Staffordshire. I do not make such a demand because that is not how the Countryside Commission operates and that is not how it will be persuaded to choose our area. I merely say that our area wants the forest, we need it and we will give it all the support and love that is required in such an immense undertaking. Our area is therefore eminently suited to be considered for the siting of the forest.

10.20 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the permission of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner)?

Mr. Vaz: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This year, my hon. and learned Member for Leicester; West (Mr. Janner) celebrates a generation in the House, having been a Member for 20 years. With his usual generosity he has allowed other Leicestershire Members to take part in the debate. I am particularly fond of my hon. and learned Friend because he brought me to the House in 1979 and took me on to the roof. It was my first visit.

Today Leicester Members on both sides of the House are united in support of the campaign. I pay tribute to the *Leicester Mercury*, the editor Mr. Leys, and its journalists for leading the campaign so dynamically. Newspapers are so often destructive, but here we have an example of a newspaper playing a constructive role in leading public opinion.

I believe that the people of Leicestershire and my constituents will cherish the forest. It will become a vital part of life in our beautiful county, which lies modestly in the heart of England. I hope that the Minister will take note of the tremendous and rare unity that we display today and will use his good offices to pass on our views to the chairman of the Countryside Commission.

10.22 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West has worked closely with the *Leicester Mercury* on this matter, which affects his own constituency. I am a member of the Leicestershire branch of the Country Landowners Association executive committee, although I own no land in Leicestershire or anywhere else—apart, that is, from a quarter of an acre of garden. At our meeting some months ago, members expressed considerable unhappiness that other counties were making more of their claim to have the forest sited in their area than Leicestershire. As a result, tremendous efforts were made by Leicestershire county council, the *Leicester Mercury* and others to get the forest in its rightful place, which is Leicestershire.

I am unique among Leicestershire Members in having a potential competitor in my own area. The Northamptonshire forest, if granted—I hope that it will not be granted—would spill into Rutland, but I am delighted to be able to tell the House that Rutland district council has said that it does not want the forest. Apparently,

"The north western part of Leicestershire was thought to be more deserving of such a scheme than Rutland."

That is the decision of Rutland district council, and I am happy to commend it.

10.23 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) for giving us this opportunity to be seen among other Leicestershire Members demonstrating our solidarity in favour of the forest. The forest has caught the imagination of the people of Leicestershire. The *Leicester Mercury* has run a good campaign. We have shown that there is very little opposition and a fantastic amount of support. That is hardly surprising because, of all the proposals, this is the only proposal for a really new forest. The forest may be between two existing forests, but the land on which it will be planted is virgin territory—it has never before been planted with a large number of trees.

There are many former mineral sites in the county which need attention and are eligible for grants. We desperately hope that the forest will come to north-east Leicestershire. It is a tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), whose idea this was originally, that there should be a massive campaign in favour of the forest and we are all behind him.

10.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on raising this important issue on the Adjournment and on securing this striking degree of all-party support. We have heard speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) as well as from the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) has ensured that his duties in the House coincide with the debate.

The interesting idea of a midlands forest emanates from the Countryside Commission which launched a consultation paper last November, giving certain details and seeking views on several key factors, particularly funding, management and, perhaps most important, location. It identified five areas which it has shortlisted—first, a north-south belt between Birmingham and Coventry; secondly, land on the borders of Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire; thirdly, an area in north-east Northamptonshire which takes in part of south-east Leicestershire; fourthly, the Sherwood forest area, mainly in Nottinghamshire but extending into eastern Derbyshire; and finally, the most westerly option, land from Droitwich into Hereford and Worcester and northwards to Telford.

The commission's aim in suggesting those options is to decide on a final site later this year which will launch a 150 sq mile multi-purpose forest, only about half of which will be in strict terms under tree cover, with the rest consisting of a blend of small woods, fields, towns and villages. In due course, like its famous and ancient counterpart in Hampshire, we hope that the new forest will become a major national asset.

The Countryside Commission has chosen the midlands for all of its candidate sites. Why? It is partly because much of the farmland is vulnerable to changes in agriculture in the light of farm surpluses and other changes in the pattern of agriculture. In addition, the midlands includes major centres of population which in some cases are only poorly or incompletely served with opportunities for countryside recreation. In addition, the past activities of industry have

produced a legacy of damaged landscapes in the area which offer considerable scope for environmental improvement.

To bring the project to completion would be a long-term challenge of great complexity. It would be the work of several generations. I am sure that good progress could be made within the first 30 years or so and that the forest would serve to enhance the landscape as well as create new habitats and outlets for recreation. It would create jobs and eventually provide an important source of home-grown timber. Great thought will have to go into planning the forest to get the balance right between soft woods and hard woods and between the different species of hard woods.

The commission has rightly stressed that, to succeed, the forest must attract the support of local people, landowners, businesses and central and local government. The consultation paper marked a first step in seeking their views. It carried a foreword by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who described the concept of a new lowlands forest as "bold and far-reaching". However, he endorsed the importance attached by the commission to canvassing a broad range of opinion to ensure that

"any scheme which results enjoys the wide support which will be a vital factor in its success".

I am sure that the commission will take into account the degree and depth of local support and the strength of local campaigns in selecting a final choice. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West has drawn attention to the support in his constituency and in Leicestershire generally. I know, because I have seen the press cuttings, that the *Leicester Mercury* has run a notable campaign in support of that site. The consultation period runs until 28 February and in parallel the commission has in hand several further studies covering likely costs, the socio-economic effects of the proposed forest and its potential environmental impact. It is also conducting surveys of public opinion in the areas concerned.

The next step will be for the commission to consider the results of those studies, once available, and the detailed response to public consultation itself.

Mr. Latham: My hon. Friend said that the consultation period ran until 28 February. Will he ensure that this debate is brought to the attention of the Countryside Commission?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I undertake to do so.

The next step is to consider the results of the surveys and, as part of the consultation process, to study the views of Members of Parliament and what is said both inside and outside the House, as I have promised.

I should stress that besides the all-important matter of location, on which the debate has focused, a number of key points remain for exhaustive consideration. Obviously, funding will be important. Considerable resources will be required for a large-scale, long-term programme.

Mr. Ashby: British Coal owns a great deal of the land and much of it has been ravaged by mining. Should not British Coal put in a great deal of the funding? Will my hon. Friend consider that?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The greater the sponsorship from the private sector or from public bodies such as British Coal, the more likely it is that the candidate sites will receive favourable consideration. I urge hon. Members not to waste any opportunities to secure corporate funding to bolster the case for their particular sites or constituencies. It is a major project and costs will be substantial. Although there are planting grants under existing schemes run by the Forestry Commission and other bodies, of themselves they will not be sufficient. We are looking for outside, additional funding to get the project off the ground and to ensure that it is followed through to a successful conclusion.

A second aspect on which decisions would be needed relates to the land itself. A significant area would need to be converted from its present use to woodland. We need to consider how that would become available, bearing in mind the size of the project. I have already said that, in total, it would encompass about 150 sq miles. There is no question of compulsory purchase—that has already been ruled out by the Countryside Commission. In any case, as I have emphasised, the forest would not consist of unbroken tree cover. Farmland and continued agriculture would form part of the essential character of the forest. However, the commission believes that local landowners would be keen to establish and manage new and existing woodland cover, but complementary to that there is also scope for linking new woodland and recreation facilities to new development and for converting derelict land to lowland forest.

I do not rule out the acquisition of land on the open market, for example, by bodies already owning and managing land, for conservation and amenity purposes.

Last but not least, we need to look ahead to see how the project and the forest would be managed in the longer term. As the commission stresses, we are talking of an extremely long-term investment and that highlights the management requirement and the essential need for continuity of that management.

Some people suppose that planting a forest is simply a question of putting in a few saplings, going away for 40 years, coming back and finding a forest. That is not the case. Trees need to be staked, watered, weeded and kept free of vermin and vandalism. In other words, we need a long-term commitment by people living and working in the area.

Mr. Tredinnick: Several villages in my constituency come within the new forest area and there is a genuine determination among landowners and all those working on the land to make a success of the project. One or two farmers were concerned that they would be forced out of business, but they have been reassured. There is tremendous support for the project right across the board in this part of west Leicestershire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I re-emphasise that there will be no compulsory purchase of land—essentially the undertaking is voluntary—and I hope that that reassures landowners in my hon. Friend's constituency.

The commission has not yet decided what the vehicle should be for undertaking the large project. Should we set up a private company on which private and public interests are represented? Should the company be publicly owned or should a voluntary organisation, perhaps with charitable status, push the project through? Perhaps the answer will be a combination of all the models, but I do not want to prejudge the issue.

As hon. Members have said, the proposed midlands forest is part of a wider trend. Worldwide there is increased

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

interest in all matters to do with trees and forests. More than ever we are conscious that the stability of global ecosystems, even of the climate itself, is crucially dependent upon forest cover in ways that we are only now beginning to understand.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West mentioned our coal deposits, which were laid down over some 300 million years. In the space of just a few centuries, however, we are putting a lot of that coal back into the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide. Planting trees can reverse that process and fix carbon dioxide back into solid form. It might be a nice concept locally that we are completing the carbon cycle by planting trees.

Great concern has also been expressed about the destruction of the tropical rain forests. In only three years this country has suffered great storms of considerable violence that have caused the loss of many trees. Some 15 million were lost in the great storm of 1987 alone. It is therefore vital that we do all we can, where we can, to promote new planting. I remind the House that only 10 per cent. of Great Britain's land area is covered by forest, in comparison with the 25 per cent. average forest cover in the European Community. There is considerable scope for increased planting.

I emphasise the importance of local support and commitment to the project. We want to harness local enthusiasm and convert it into firm offers of involvement by private and voluntary organisations, companies and the public generally. In part at least, a final choice of location for the forest will be critically dependent on practical local support of that sort.

We have had a useful, although short, debate. The vision of a midlands forest is an exciting one. But, like anything worth while, it will not be achieved without hard work and commitment. From what I heard during this debate, that dedication exists in the midlands in abundance. I cannot possibly prejudge which of the candidate sites will be selected. For the present, I must simply note the views expressed. I have already undertaken to pass them on to the Countryside Commission. I will certainly bear in mind both the support and the views expressed when the final decision has to be taken.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 27 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CLYDE PORT AUTHORITY BILL

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES (No. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 1 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Pay

1. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress towards setting up new collective bargaining arrangements for teachers.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): I held a series of constructive meetings with the teacher unions and employers towards the end of last year. I am considering carefully the points put to me, and will make a further statement as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Mr. Haynes: That is not good enough. I want a firm commitment from the Secretary of State on whether the settlement in 1991 for teachers will be reached only by negotiations between the teachers and the employers. I want to know today—not next week or later, but today.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman makes his points very loudly and forcefully to the teaching unions. If he does, he will know that they are divided about the right way forward for the long-term pay machinery. That is one difficulty preventing us from reaching a conclusion on the matter. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am aiming—I hope that agreement will be reached on this for next year—to replace the interim advisory committee by a long-term arrangement.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we do not want son of Burnham, or Burnham mark II, or any of that nonsense? Does he agree that we want improvements in pay matched by improvements in professionalism in the teaching service? We need a well-motivated, well-trained teaching force which can impart a love of learning to the nation's children.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend on both points. On the first point, I think that Burnham now has very few friends. There seems to be general agreement that we do not want to return to that system. Difficulties arise because there are divided views about what should replace it.

On the second point, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that my immediate acceptance of the interim advisory committee's report on teachers' pay, with its far-reaching recommendations, will help to provide a better career structure for teachers. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of professionalism among teachers. It is extremely important, and I know that the vast majority of teachers set store by it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: What is the Secretary of State waiting for? Does he realise that the sooner he announces a date for meetings with the unions—given that there has been no meeting since November—the sooner the confidence of the profession will be restored? Many teachers are unhappy, as he well knows, with the 7·3 per cent. or, according to his figures, 8·3 per cent. increase. Teachers are not responding by coming back in shortage areas, and they will do so only when they know that they can put their case, the Secretary of State can put his, and there will be proper discussions and agreement about what they should be paid. What is he waiting for?

Mr. MacGregor: The first thing was to get the April 1990 settlement out of the way. We have still to do that, as the hon. Gentleman knows, because I am still consulting teacher unions and employers on the interim advisory committee's recommendations. I have accepted those excellent recommendations, and I hope that they will, too, because I believe that they will make considerable improvements to the structure and the overall position of teachers' pay. The next stage is to continue discussions on long-term machinery, and I hope before too long to be able to embark on the necessary round of meetings on that. But we must get the discussions on next year's settlement out of the way.

Music Teaching

2. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage the teaching of music in schools.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Music is a foundation subject in the national curriculum. This means that it will form part of the curriculum for every pupil aged five to 16 in maintained schools in England and Wales. We hope to make an announcement soon on the machinery to be set up to advise on the national curriculum requirements for music.

Mr. Devlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Cleveland substantial fees are now proposed for children taking part in musical activity out of school hours, if the school is not under direct local education authority control? The basis of the scheme is that the amount will be deducted from the budget of all county schools as part of the central funding arrangements under the local management of schools. The parents of children attending private schools, and other schools outside LEA control will have to pay a substantial sum each term, despite the fact that they already pay rates or community charge.

Mrs. Rumbold: I was not aware of it, but I deplore it. Traditionally, children attending independent and LEA

schools have been able to take part in extracurricular activities such as playing in local youth orchestras. Asking the parents of independent school pupils to pay exhibits vindictiveness on the part of the local authority, and I hope that community charge payers will take up the matter with their local finance directors.

Ms. Walley: Is the Minister aware that music has been designated an official shortage subject? Many schools have no music teacher in post, making it impossible to introduce the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are taking steps to ensure that there are enough music teachers when the national curriculum music requirement comes into full force. We are already looking to schools to deliver the music element of the national curriculum—as they are under an obligation to do—and we trust that when the official requirements come into force in two years' time, there will be enough music teachers to carry out the necessary duties.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the question of solo and group singing teaching? Despite her best endeavours, the continuing confusion about charges is very detrimental to music nationally.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall certainly undertake to do that. When choral singing is part of the school curriculum there is no question of charging for lessons, but when individual tuition is given for purposes unconnected with examinations, schools may charge under the legislation.

Qualified Teachers

4. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to attract qualified teachers back into teaching and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: From April 1990 I am making education support grant available to 45 local education authorities to support expenditure of £4 million over two years for recruitment of qualified teacher returners and mature new entrants to teaching. In addition, the work of the teaching as a career unit is to be expanded, and that unit's conferences and published advice to LEAs on returners will be provided in the spring.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply, despite the fact that I am an Opposition, not a Conservative Member. Does he consider, however, that the comparative failure to attract sufficient teachers back into the profession shows, first, the continuing pressure on teachers caused by the introduction of the national curriculum, and, secondly, the low morale that is endemic in the profession as a result of a continuing lack of resources and comparatively small salaries?

Mr. MacGregor: Considerable numbers of teachers are joining and returning to the profession each year. According to the provisional figures for 1987—the latest figures available to me—the number is approaching 30,000, of whom more than 16,000 are re-entrants. But I agree that this is an important matter. Not least because of the demographic downturn in the number of school leavers, there will clearly be competition from all employers. As a high proportion of qualified teachers—for entirely respectable reasons—are not currently teaching, they will comprise a significant element of the profession in the 1990s.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of ensuring that teachers overcome their fears of the national curriculum. That is one reason why I am making the money available: it is intended to enable teachers who are not teaching at present to keep in touch with developments.

Mr. Dunn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the south-east national pay scales and national pay bargaining are a tremendous disincentive to the recruitment and retention of teachers? Does he agree that it is time to move towards a position where schools set the salary levels that they wish to offer, if they are to retain and attract teachers?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will have noted the considerable increase in flexibility locally and in schools as a result of the interim advisory committee's recommendations this year, which the committee described as far-reaching. I greatly welcome that increased flexibility, which is one of the many merits of the report. It will go a considerable way towards achieving my hon. Friend's objective.

Ms. Armstrong: The Secretary of State will know that we lose more women from the work force for longer periods than do our European competitors. According to an Equal Opportunities Commission survey last year, the main reason is the lack of adequate quality child care. What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that there are sufficient nursery places so that women teachers can confidently return to the classroom?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Lady is right to focus on this important group of people. About 250,000 qualified teachers between the ages of 31 and 44, most of them women, are not teaching for perfectly respectable family reasons. It is important to attract them back into teaching. A range of measures is required: supportive and flexible working conditions, flexible pay, part-time work and job share opportunities, together with the child care provision that the hon. Lady described and the access to in-service training that I described. That is important and I am keen to encourage it. I had a meeting recently with the National Union of Teachers at which we discussed its good pamphlet on the subject. I agree with the vast majority of the pamphlet's contents.

Village Schools

5. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding small village schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): My right hon. Friend regularly receives representations about rural primary schools which are the subject of reorganisation proposals.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents are pleased with his positive attitude towards small schools? Will he turn his attention to Syderstone primary school in my constituency which is being considered for closure by a Norfolk county council sub-committee, although we hope that it will change its

mind? Although only 19 children are on the school roll at the moment, there are 47 children of primary school age in the village. Evidently, there are special reasons for the fall in numbers. Does my hon. Friend agree that the way forward is for the school to be given a reprieve to enable it to build up its numbers?

Mr. Howarth: If proposals are published to close Syderstone primary school, the case could come to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for decision, so my hon. Friend will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment. I have, however, noted my hon. Friend's active concern about the school—as, I am sure, have his constituents. I assure him that any points that he puts to us on behalf of his constituents will be considered carefully.

On the more general issue, we recognise that small schools can provide excellent education. We also recognise that rural schools play an important part in the life of the local community. They are some of the factors that my right hon. Friend takes into account when he makes judgments on these cases.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If all that is true, why do the Government insist on placing on counties such as Cumbria the responsibility to close rural schools by cutting their budgets? In the county where I live, people pay taxes for education and they want those schools to be retained. They cannot understand a Government who say, "Keep them", while also saying, "We intend to take your money away so that you will have to close them."

Mr. Howarth: Underoccupied schools carry high unit costs. That is a consideration which local education authorities should properly take into account. They should also take into account the quality of the education provided by the schools and the wishes and needs of the local community. It is for local education authorities to initiate proposals.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend accept that although I welcome his support for small primary schools in villages, the cut in planned expenditure from Government central funding for Devon will inevitably harm the capital expenditure proposals for Horrabridge county primary school, where the children have to cross two main roads from one set of temporary classrooms to another, which is wholly unacceptable?

Mr. Howarth: The annual capital guidelines that we issue to local education authorities on the capital expenditure that they may undertake on schools are based on well-understood criteria and priorities. If Devon's capital guideline does not in all respects match my hon. Friend's desires, that is because the bids put forward by her county did not closely match our priorities. It is entirely for the authority to make its own determination on whether to spend money on an individual county school.

Sport

6. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement about the provision of sport in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Sport in school is an important part of physical education, which is now a foundation subject in the national curriculum. I welcome also the wide provision of sporting opportunities for young people outside the school day.

Miss Hoey: Is the Minister alarmed at the way in which sport in schools is being affected by the severe shortage of physical education teachers, which is as much as 22 per cent. in some areas? Does she agree that the Government have downgraded physical education by not yet setting up a formal working party to look into the physical education curriculum?

Mrs. Rumbold: It was only a short time ago that we had a considerable surplus of physical education teachers in Britain. I agree with the hon. Lady that at the earliest possible moment we should set up a working group to look into the provision of physical education in schools under the national curriculum. The issue raised by the hon. Lady will also be considered.

Sir John Stokes: Although the battle of Waterloo may not have been won on the playing fields of Eton, does my hon. Friend agree that sport plays an important part in encouraging leadership among young people? Will she have a word with the public schools and ask them to help the state sector in improving sporting facilities?

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. I agree that physical education and sport are a very important part of school life. As it will be part of the national curriculum, where necessary we shall be able to improve the standard of sport in the maintained sector. I am glad that England is doing rather well in rugby union and cricket.

Mr. Fatchett: Although the Minister may take some immediate comfort from what is happening in Jamaica, will she confirm that in the vast majority of schools in Britain there are serious risks to the continued provision of school sport and physical education? Will she also confirm that the local management of schools, the privatisation of leisure facilities and the general squeeze on budgets caused by the poll tax put school sport even more at risk? Although there may be optimism today, in 10 years' time, unless there is a change in Government policy, fewer people will be playing sport at international level.

Mrs. Rumbold: I remind the hon. Gentleman that physical education is part of the national curriculum. It is highlighted precisely because of our concern about the decline in sporting facilities and physical education over the past 10 years and considerably beyond that, because of the attitude of some teachers towards competitive sports. We consider competitive sports to be an important part of education, but sadly teachers in charge of physical education did not always agree. I am convinced that the introduction of physical education as part of the national curriculum will dispel the nonsense about competitive sports and that youngsters will be encouraged to play sport as part of their total school curriculum.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware that the half-baked attitude of some teachers who oppose any competitive sport is the greatest possible impediment, and that it is of considerable concern to Cambridgeshire county cricket association?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right. The rubbish and nonsense that have been spoken about the dangers of

competitive sport for small children in particular have undermined the provision of physical education and sport in schools. Young children enjoy competitive sport. We should encourage that, not discourage it.

Student Loans

7. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on progress towards introducing top-up student loans.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Having had an easy passage in this House, the Education (Student Loans) Bill is having its Second Reading in another place today. Rapid progress is being made on preparatory work. Subject to Parliament's approval, we are well on course for providing extra resources for students this autumn.

Mr. Kennedy: I congratulate the Minister on finding a fantasist to draft that reply. Given the utterly disastrous meeting on 19 February of the leaders of the main education institutions, who made clear their implacable hostility to the proposals, and the absurd fact that the Government Chief Whip in another place is today imposing a three-line whip and saying that this is an issue of confidence, will the Minister at least display even-handedness? He accepted, with some magnanimity, the decision of the high streets banks to withdraw. If the independent education institutions hold their line not to co-operate, will he adopt an even-handed attitude and not force them when he was unable to force the banks?

Mr. Jackson: The Government are considering whether they need the co-operation of the higher education institutions in providing this money for their students. When we have made up our minds, we shall decide whether to table an amendment to the Bill, as they have invited us to do.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that such loans are a feature of the education systems in America, Japan and many European countries, including several Socialist countries? Does he further agree that those who have the advantage of a university education should make some repayment to the state?

Mr. Jackson: A striking feature of the debate on student loans was that all the major contributors, including the vice-chancellors, to whom the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) referred, favour the principle of a graduate contribution. That is real progress. The only dissenting voice is the Opposition, but it appears that even they have dissenters on that point in their ranks in the other place.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister have any idea how the student loans scheme will work? If he has, why did he not tell us during debates on the Bill? If he does not, why, after more than two years, has this not been solved?

Mr. Jackson: We have a very good idea how the student loans scheme will work. It will work very well.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend spare a thought for my student constituents, many of whose grants have not been paid by Labour-controlled Ealing council for last term, let alone this term? That council, like the Labour party, opposes student loans. Students are forced to take out loans at high interest rates to pay for their board and lodging. Is not it time that the hypocrisy of the Labour party and Ealing council ended and that they looked after students properly?

Mr. Jackson: I commiserate with my hon. Friend's student constituents. I have been in correspondence with Ealing council about the matter. I agree with my hon. Friend that the availability of student loans will provide a resource for students which will make them more independent of the local authority grant system and of their parents.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Are not the procedures that the Secretary of State announced yesterday further confirmation of the vast and sinister big brother bureauracy that the Government are imposing to run the scheme? Specifically, can the Minister assure the House today that the Student Loans Company will not have access to individuals' tax records and that he will reimburse institutions for the additional administrative costs incurred with the loans scheme and with the access funds?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman, uncharacteristically, goes over the top. There is nothing unusual about the arrangements that we are making for student loans. The loan is simply a form of customer credit and is common in other cases. There is no question of access to tax records. Indeed, that is one of our arguments against the proposal for a graduate tax which is favoured by the vice-chancellors. The hon. Gentleman must reflect on the fact that many people will have borrowed substantial sums from the taxpayer to finance their higher education and will have derived benefit from that. They will be under an obligation to repay that money to the taxpayer and it is perfectly reasonable that best commercial practice should be followed by the Student Loans Company in pursuing defaulters.

Undergraduate Course Applications

8. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the trend in the number of applications for full-time undergraduate courses at universities and polytechnics since the Government announced their plans for introducing a student top-up loan scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: Applications for 1990 admission to full-time undergraduate courses received by the Universities Central Council on Admissions and the Polytechnics Central Admissions System by mid-December were at least 6 per cent. higher than comparable figures for the record 1989 entry. Full-time admissions to universities and to the polytechnics and colleges funding sector in 1989 are estimated to be 10 per cent. higher than in 1988.

Mr. Mitchell: In view of the widespread welcome that the Government's plans for expanding the higher sector of education have received and the fact that they must also be paid for, is it not perfectly fair, right and proper that students themselves should make some modest contribution to the expense of implementing those plans?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It should also be borne in mind that many of the taxpayers who will be helping to fund students during their period at

university or polytechnic will, throughout their working lives, be earning a good deal less than the students will earn when they get into work. That is an additional reason why it is reasonable, as in so many other countries, to ask students to make a small contribution through the loans system. That has widespread support from parents and taxpayers throughout the country.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Applications for admission may be influenced by the student loan leaflet which the Department of Education published before the Report stage of the Education (Student Loans) Bill in this House. As the Bill is currently in the other place and amendments may be agreed to there, will the leaflet be pulped or is it assumed that the Bill will be forced through by a three-line Whip in this House?

Mr. MacGregor: The leaflet was produced in response to a considerable demand for information for potential students who might wish to go to universities or polytechnics next year. There was also a demand from Opposition Members for that information to be published. The leaflet makes it clear that the details contained therein are subject to the final outcome of the progress of the Bill in Parliament. Clearly, if there were changes, we should want to amend the leaflet. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it is right to provide that information for students who may be considering going to university or polytechnic in the autumn. Although there has been a good deal of publicity about the student loans scheme and few students can be unaware that it is likely to be in existence next year, the demand for places has increased, as it did last year when the scheme was in prospect. That is a clear sign that the loan scheme is not a hindrance to access to higher education.

Surplus School Accommodation

9. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local authorities have surplus school accommodation.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information about the number of surplus places in individual local education authorities is not held centrally.

Mrs. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that the priority for resources going into education should be to educate pupils through books, equipment and teachers' salaries, and not to prop up empty desks and classrooms? Does he agree that it is a most awful waste of taxpayers' and community chargepayers' money if local authorities fail to exercise their responsibility to close those schools which have to be closed and to eliminate waste? In Wolverhampton alone, there are 11,000 surplus places and community chargepayers will be paying to keep them open.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to make those points. I very much hope that authorities in Wolverhampton and elsewhere will recognise that failure to grasp the nettle of surplus places means that children are consigned to inferior education in inadequate schools, that money is wasted rather than being spent positively on other valuable educational projects in the area, and that community charge payers are asked to bear a cost to no good purpose.

Mr. Alfred Morris: How many local education authorities have accommodation which, owing to lack of capital expenditure even for essential repairs, they cannot use? Is it not a shocking response to the crying need in Manchester that next year we shall receive barely one tenth of the amount needed even to repair old and poor school buildings in some of the most deprived parts of the city?

Mr. Howarth: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that under the last Labour Government capital spending on schools was cut by 50 per cent. after the International Monetary Fund took charge of our economy in 1976. Since then, capital expenditure per pupil in our schools has risen by 10 per cent. and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has secured an increase in the money available for capital expenditure from £352 million under the capital allocation system last year to £485 million under the capital guidelines system this year. We shall, of course, look as sympathetically as we can at the needs of Manchester. As I said in response to an earlier question, however, the guidelines that we have issued to individual authorities are based on well-understood and well-established criteria. If the bids from Manchester did not match those criteria this year, it was a matter of regret to us that we were not able to give more help. I hope very much that next year Manchester will make bids more closely related to the priorities that we have indicated. Then, of course, we shall look as sympathetically as we can at Manchester's needs.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Regarding school accommodation, will my hon. Friend do all that he can to continue to support parental choice and the open entry policy provided for in the Education Reform Act 1988? Will he do all that he can to support good schools which have room for more pupils against local authorities which for bureaucratic reasons restrict entry to those schools?

Mr. Howarth: I agree very much with my hon. Friend. It is a matter of satisfaction that the system of more open enrolment will start to operate from next September and parents will have a greatly enhanced right to determine the schools to which their children go. That factor, combined with the pupil-based element of formula funding of local management of schools, will mean that parental choice is the principal determinant of the financial resources that go into schools.

Mr. Straw: As the learned judge pointed out last Friday when he declared unlawful the Secretary of State's decision in the case of Beechen Cliff school in Bath, the Government, by their policy of allowing schools to opt out, are wilfully sabotaging the ability of local education authorities rationally to reorganise their schools provision in the light of surplus places. Will the Under-Secretary and the Secretary of State now abandon this most cynical and amoral abuse of power, by which local education authorities are encouraged—indeed, forced—by the Government to name schools for closure or reorganisation but as soon as local authorities name them the Secretary of State allows the schools to opt out?

Mr. Howarth: The Bath judgment is about the procedure used in determining this particular grant-maintained application in relation to other reorganisation proposals put forward by the authority. It does not affect the overall policy of making available to schools the option of grant-maintained status. The availability of the

grant-maintained option is certainly no bar to authorities' bringing forward sensible reorganisation schemes. Authorities have always been required to take proper account of the views of local people. Ballots on grant-maintained status are one way in which such views may be expressed. We have always made it clear that grant-maintained status cannot be a refuge for unviable schools. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has turned down 11 applications.

National Curriculum

10. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to introduce flexibility into the curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently described the flexibility that will be available to schools in planning the curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds. He has asked the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council to consider further a number of aspects.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. I accept that the disadvantages of specialising too early will be combated by the national curriculum, but does my hon. Friend agree that if pupils in these two educationally important years are to be given the best opportunity, provision should be made for options in addition to the national curriculum?

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes, indeed, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is exactly the course outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his speech to the Society of Education Officers—the availability of a different combination of subjects which it is open to young people to take at the same time as studying the national curriculum foundation and core subjects. My right hon. Friend made it clear that core subjects are expected to be followed and that national curriculum foundation subjects will also be followed, but that in some cases the foundation subjects may be combined with other subjects for study in those two crucial years.

Mr. Leighton: In seeking that flexibility, will the Minister bear in mind the situation in the London borough of Newham, where the standard spending assessment has been set for next year at £98½ million, whereas for expenditure even to stand still we need £105·7 million? That adds up to a cut of £7¼ million. If that axe fell on teachers alone, we should have only 411 teachers left. I know that most members of the Cabinet have their children educated privately, but what effect does the Minister think that these cuts will have in the deprived London borough of Newham?

Mrs. Rumbold: In the first place, the Government give grant to local authorities to underpin education expenditure. In the current year we expect there to be some £15 billion of expenditure—a 9·6 per cent. increase in the total amount of expenditure for education services. It is for the local authority to decide how to spend the Government support. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the national curriculum is an entitlement for all children in our schools, and I trust that all local authorities will bear that in mind in assessing their priorities.

Sir Ian Lloyd: Can my hon. Friend conceive of any curriculum flexibility which could possibly compensate for the ill-preparedness for life of those little dears on whose posteriors the High Court ruled yesterday not even a wooden spoon may fall without incurring the wrath of the judicial system?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend expresses a point of view. There are ways, as there always have been ways, for teachers to maintain sensible discipline in class. It is imperative for children to have a disciplined environment in which to learn, and if teachers can exert discipline by other methods it is most important that they should do so.

Veterinary Education

11. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Page report.

12. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which university veterinary schools the Page inquiry into veterinary education visited during its inquiry; how many days were spent at each veterinary school taking evidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I welcome the report of the committee chaired by Dr. Page on the demand for veterinary manpower, and the possible consequences for veterinary education. The committee took only oral and written evidence. The Government have already accepted the report's recommendations to remove limits on admissions to veterinary schools and to discontinue associated manpower reviews. The Universities Funding Council has now rejected the Riley report's recommendations affecting the Glasgow and Cambridge veterinary schools.

Mr. Worthington: It is good news that the Glasgow veterinary school has been saved, but will the Secretary of State condemn the recommendation in the Page report that takes all limits off the expansion of veterinary places and urges colleges wishing to do so to impose a levy on all students to finance expansion? If that proposal were accepted, the implications for higher education and for the principle of free access to higher education would be terrible. Will the Minister reject that recommendation?

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman at least welcomes the decision not to go ahead with the merging of the Glasgow and Edinburgh veterinary schools. I believe that that decision was absolutely right and I think that the decision to set up the Page inquiry —a decision taken by me—had a good deal to do with it.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, it will, of course, be for individual institutions to decide whether to implement the recommendation to expand above the 400 limit, taking into account student demand, the Universities Funding Council's new mechanism for funding student places and their own circumstances.

Mr. Madel: After a thorough inquiry, the Riley committee said that the level of staffing in United Kingdom veterinary schools should increase, yet the Page committee said that there could be a 10 per cent. cut in the unit of resource without any noticeable effect on the quality of veterinary education. Does the Minister agree that the recommendation of the Page committee on the unit of resource is not acceptable?

Mr. MacGregor: The Page committee went into the matter with great thoroughness and realism. It is for the Universities Funding Council and the institutions to decide what to do. The Page committee was right in the view that it reached on the demand for veterinary graduates. It is for the institutions to respond to that point and the Page report was a useful insight into it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is not the principle of the community charge which causes concern, but the amounts that Liberal and Labour-controlled councils are asking people to pay? Is she further aware that Gloucestershire county council, which is controlled by the Liberals, has just set its community charge level and has seriously breached all Government guidelines on spending? Will she, without delay, set in motion a mechanism to charge-cap Gloucestershire?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the position in Gloucestershire. As my hon. Friend says, it is a Liberal-Labour-controlled council. Conservatives are proposing lower community charges. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has said that if councils persist in charging excessively high public expenditure he will not hesitate to charge-cap them. I cannot give any undertaking with regard to any particular council. My right hon. Friend must wait until all the charges have been set, then consider the matter and make up his own mind.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that yesterday in the House her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy told hon. Members that household electricity prices will rise by between 8 and 9 per cent., and that two or three boards may increase their charges by a higher percentage? Can she tell us how that will help in the fight against inflation?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, those price increases come after a period during which the real price of electricity has fallen substantially. Indeed, the real reduction of 8 per cent. which domestic customers have enjoyed over the past five years must be taken into account. I really must take the right hon. Gentleman to task. Under the last Labour Government electricity went up by 2 per cent. every six weeks.

Mr. Kinnock: Cannot the Prime Minister get it through her head that it is the bills that people face now which really bother them and that she is blamed for most of those bills? If she cannot answer my first question, can she say how she thinks that the 13 per cent. increase in water charges, the 13 per cent. increase in rail fares and the 50 per cent. increase in mortgage interest rates will help in the fight against inflation?

The Prime Minister: When the hon. Gentleman raised these matters with me, I pointed out that for both water and electricity we required higher standards for environmental reasons. I said that if people required higher standards, it would mean higher expenditure. The right hon. Gentleman agreed then that higher standards would mean higher prices, so why does he disagree now?

Mr. Kinnock: As the Prime Minister is so interested in recent history, will she tell us why such huge increases are necessary after all the time that she has been in power, when plainly a great deterioration must have taken place?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the real price of electricity has gone down in recent years. Since privatisation, the real price of gas has gone down and since privatisation the real price of British Telecom services has gone down, so I am really rather proud—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Is the right hon. Gentleman now saying that he intends to drop all efforts at increasing—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that he is going to drop all support for and all policy on environmental improvement, because that is what his question implies?

Sir Marcus Fox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite the embarrassment to the Leader of the Opposition the House should welcome the triumph of democracy in Nicaragua?

The Prime Minister: Yes, once again the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was on the wrong side. I congratulate Mrs. Chamorro on becoming President of Nicaragua. It was a splendidly fought campaign. The people turned out the Ortega Socialist Government and I wish Mrs. Chamorro well.

Q2. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Prime Minister confirm that if local education authorities spend to the limit that she has set for the poll tax they will have to lose tens of thousands of teaching posts, and that the education of the nation's children will suffer? Is she happy to contemplate that prospect, or is she asking them to follow her example and that of many of her hon. Friends and to abandon state education and say that they are not bothered about it?

The Prime Minister: No, the hon. Lady is assuming that the more money that is spent on education, the better the education is. I am afraid that that is not the case. The highest spending authority in this country is ILEA, which has the worst education.

3. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is my right hon. Friend aware that President Menem of Argentina has said that he has nothing but the highest respect for her and her Government and also that the state's finances can be saved only through rapid privatisation? Does she agree that that offers great opportunities for British companies?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that those are the right policies, but whether they can be put into effect in Argentina is another matter. There are great problems there at the moment. As my hon. Friend knows, we have just restored diplomatic relations with Argentina. I hope and believe that trade relations should now be stepped up and that the people who had interests there before will continue them. However, that will necessitate the Argentines bringing down their enormous rate of inflation because it will be impossible to invest until that comes down.

Q4. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Can the Prime Minister honestly defend the expenditure of £100 million this financial year on allowing hospitals to opt out while health authorities across the country face huge deficits, cuts and closures? Is she aware that the treasurer of Wakefield district health authority, Mr. Ray Corner, has just been sacked because he refused to allow the use of public money for wining and dining those involved in the opting-out process at a time when there are dangerously low nurse staffing levels in Wakefield district health authority? Will the right hon. Lady set up an inquiry into the matter?

The Prime Minister: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, self-governing hospitals are not opting out of the Health Service in any way. They are part of the Health Service, but much more in charge of how to run themselves and take their own decisions. If they choose to work harder and take more patients, they receive increased income. No hospital can become self-governing until the Bill currently before the House has gone through, so at present there is no such thing.

Q5. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Batiste: While German unification must necessarily be primarily a matter for the German people, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the natural and legitimate concerns of many other countries would be best allayed if the German Government took an early opportunity to confirm their acceptance of Germany's post-war boundaries?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. When the Polish Prime Minister came on an official visit to this country he was most concerned about Poland's boundaries and that they should be guaranteed by treaty. He felt that the Helsinki accord and assurances were not sufficient, and that Poland was entitled to have its boundaries guaranteed by treaty. We fully support him, and I hope that that will come about. In the meantime, it would be very good to receive an assurance that it will come about.

Mr. Ashdown: Having last week blamed Conservative councils—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashdown: Having last week blamed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashdown: Having last week blamed Conservative councils for the poll tax, will the Prime Minister this week condemn Conservative peers who have described her student loan scheme as "crazy"? Why does she believe that the best way to encourage young people into higher education is first to saddle them with the burden of a loan?

The Prime Minister: The Education (Student Loans) Bill has passed through this House and gone to the other place. The right hon. Gentleman is, or should be, aware that all educational tuition is free. The grant goes only for maintenance and there is also a topping-up loan for maintenance. All education remains free. For many young people who are unable to get a parental contribution to their grant, even though they would be entitled to one, it will be helpful to get the best value loan on offer anywhere in the country.

Q6. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilshire: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since 1948 doctors have had the right to refuse patients admission to their lists? Does she agree that it is totally wrong for a few general practitioners to use the excuse of a new contract to refuse patients admission to their lists? Will she join me in condemning the cruel and misleading campaign being run by a daily newspaper which seems to be aimed at frightening patients into opposing the new contract? Will she also join me in calling on the Labour party to disown that campaign?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I join my hon. Friend in doing that. First, there are now more doctors as general practitioners in the Health Service than there were some years ago, so their lists are considerably smaller than they used to be. Secondly, the new contract deliberately provides a bigger capitation fee for vulnerable patients and nearly doubles the amount for each patient aged 75 or over. Thirdly, it doubles the payments for night visits which the general practitioner undertakes. Therefore, it is a very good contract, which I hope that most general practitioners will welcome. I know that some GPs are putting people off their lists. As my hon. Friend says, that is something that they have been able to do since 1948. I was pleased that the British Medical Association has said that it regards such action by general practitioners as unacceptable.

Mr. Lofthouse: What advice would the Prime Minister give to education authorities such as mine in Wakefield where abiding by the standard spending assessment will

mean a reduction in education spending of 22 per cent., equivalent to the cost of 1,450 teachers? Who is to teach our children?

The Prime Minister: The maximum amount spent on education does not mean the very best education. We learned that many years ago. The standard— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must have a chance to give her answer.

The Prime Minister: The standard spending assessment gives a reasonable amount to be spent on education. It will provide extremely good education for our children, provided that it is managed and run well by the local education authorities.

Q7. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite the positive reforms introduced during her Administration, recent events have made it clear that the British trade union movement has a long way to go before it can be considered either democratically accountable to its members or free of manipulation by political extremists?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that there is still quite a long way to go. A new trade union Bill is coming before the House which will give every union member the right to complain to the certification officer or to the court if he believes that a union has acted unlawfully. We shall continue our reform of the trade union movement. We believe it has been very beneficial to the ordinary members of trade unions.

Flooding (North Wales)

3.31 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members not remaining for the private notice question please leave quietly?

Sir Anthony Meyer *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement about the flooding in north Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): A combination of high tides, severe weather and gales gusting at times to 100 mph has led to flooding and damage on the north Wales coast.

Parts of the Rhyl and Prestatyn areas have been flooded due to the over-topping of the sea defences, and the new Nova centre at Prestatyn has suffered extensive damage. At Ffynnongroyw near Prestatyn, 50 people have been evacuated from their homes. The railway line has been flooded.

At Towyn, the sea wall has been breached and 900 people have been evacuated from their homes. There has been extensive flooding of properties.

At Dinas Dinlle near Caernarfon, 15 people have been evacuated from their homes following an over-topping of the sea walls.

There was a further high tide at 12.15 today, and a forecast of further gale force winds and a storm surge. The reports that I have so far received indicate that there has been further extensive flooding in the same areas.

The emergency services and the local authorities are dealing with the immediate problems. I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in paying tribute to the dedication and hard work of all those involved in safeguarding life and property. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has immediately flown to north Wales and is visiting the areas worst affected.

The Bellwin rules will, of course, apply if the criteria are met.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that statement and for the prompt and energetic action that he has characteristically taken. Is he aware that what has happened in my constituency and in adjoining constituencies is a disaster of major magnitude, that a great burden is falling on the local rescue services, which have responded magnificently, and that heavy charges will now fall on the local authorities in the provision of temporary accommodation for those who must be moved out—not, it seems, for a day or two but perhaps for several days—and in the clearing up and repair work that remains to be done? Is he satisfied that the Bellwin formula will adequately safeguard the position of the local authorities, bearing in mind the present pressures on local government finance?

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. A few moments ago I had a telephone call from my hon. Friend the Minister of State confirming the considerable problems and damage in my hon. Friend's constituency. The Bellwin rules apply if district councils are involved in expenditure of more than—for example, in Delyn—£27,000. My hon. Friend will know that that is virtually certain in the district councils with which he is involved, so there will be substantial grants from the Government. I shall examine carefully any capital expenditure that may be necessary to see whether further quotas will be required.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I join the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) in thanking the emergency services for the tremendous work that they have done in Clwyd and in my county of Gwynedd. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that local authorities will receive financial assistance to meet any revenue shortfall that may arise as a result of the work that has to be done, and that finance will be made available to the emergency services, such as the ambulance service, which may have suffered? Will the right hon. Gentleman also give an assurance that the sea defence walls along the coast will be reviewed in detail and, if a massive capital expenditure programme is necessary to safeguard the communities, that will be undertaken?

Mr. Walker: On the latter point, the hon. Gentleman knows that there has been large capital expenditure over the years in that area, but if further action is recommended, I shall examine it positively. We shall review the impact of the disaster and see what decisions need to be taken, but the most likely action will be on some capital expenditure programmes and in those areas covered by the Bellwin rules, and we shall ensure that instant decisions are taken.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I, too, pay tribute to all the emergency services and to the local authorities which have acted so promptly. As my right hon. Friend rightly says, the flooding today was worse than yesterday. In the village of Ffynnongroyw it was between 18 in and 2 ft. However, during the rest of the week, we are faced with consistently high tides and, depending on wind and surge, we could have more serious flooding.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his assurance that the Bellwin rules are likely to be applied. Every assistance must be given to the local authorities involved, but will he also get in touch this afternoon with British Rail to ensure that all that can be done will be done to close temporarily the sea wall at Ffynnongroyw? However, in the longer term we obviously need a much more substantial sea wall, as the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, and British Rail may well need capital help.

As my right hon. Friend well knows, the coastal protection works at Prestatyn have gone through a major reconstruction in recent years at a cost of nearly £6 million, and local people need reassurance that those works, particularly those that have been newly constructed, remain effective. I know that my right hon. Friend will act promptly, particularly as so many houses in that area have been flooded.

Finally, the Nova complex, which is the main tourist attraction in the town, and on which the local economy depends, has been devastated. Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to help reconstruction there, and, if possible, when he visits my constituency next Tuesday, will he visit Ffynnongroyw and Prestatyn?

Mr. Walker: I know how concerned my hon. Friend is, and that he has left hospital in order to be here this afternoon. We appreciate the considerable anxiety that he has displayed towards his constituents' problems. We shall carefully examine the lessons to be learnt from the sea wall.

As my hon. Friend says, I shall be visiting his part of north Wales next week, and I shall endeavour to find time to examine some of the problems and to speak to the local authorities involved.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the Secretary of State assure the House that the Bellwin rules will apply to any requests from Clwyd county council with regard to the anthrax outbreak in the earlier part of this financial year and the present flooding? Secondly, has the right hon. Gentleman made representations to the Secretary of State for Social Security to ensure that crisis payments will not be held back by any vagaries of the social fund?

Mr. Walker: The Bellwin rules, which were agreed with local government, will operate according to the rules of local government. There will not be a combining of every incident that takes place. I think that the hon. Gentleman realises that local authorities rightly have contingency funds which they expect to cover some incidents of this description.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Harris—on Wales.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Representing as I do, an area which has been grievously and repeatedly hit by this winter's storms, may I extend my sympathy to the people of north Wales on the disaster that they have suffered? Will my right hon. Friend kindly have a word with the Minister of Agriculture and the Secretary of State for the Environment to try to arrange a comprehensive examination of our sea defences? I assure him that much money will have to be spent on many parts of the coastline, particularly in Cornwall, to try to improve the defences against the sea and storm such as we have experienced repeatedly during this winter.

Mr. Walker: I will certainly convey to my right hon. Friends the views which my hon. Friend has expressed.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does the Secretary of State agree that the whole of Wales has been hard hit this year by flooding and other national disasters? Does he accept that it is not enough to refer to local authority contingency funds and that it will take positive action by him, including knocking together the heads of those authorities which need it, to ensure that remedial work is undertaken so that flooding does not affect people in Wales in future?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we will carefully examine the various problems in different parts of Wales that have occurred as a result of flooding, and that we shall examine and discuss with local authorities what action needs to be taken.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. Friend will be aware that it is only a few weeks since I asked a similar private notice question, about flooding in my constituency; that question was answered by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. Since then, I have been in correspondence with the National Rivers Authority and the district councils. There seems to be confusion and doubt about whose responsibility it is in the long term to deal with the flooding. Can my right hon. Friend assure us that there will be meetings between the National Rivers Authority and district councils, and that an attempt will be made to see whether European money can be made available for the important job of constructing new sea wall defences?

Mr. Walker: I will certainly examine my hon. Friend's suggestion. As a result of the events that have taken place this year, we will have discussions with local authorities, the river authorities and all concerned to see that positive action is taken.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that those of us who come from Merseyside are deeply concerned about the problems of Clwyd because not only do many of our people go to live there but it is also a great lung for us? We love going to that part of north Wales, because the small towns and the seaside towns give us an opportunity at weekends to get some decent air into our lungs. I hope that the Government will give every possible support to the people in north Wales because, by doing so, they will also be supporting built-up areas like Merseyside.

Mr. Walker: I very much appreciate the hon. Gentleman's remarks. As he rightly says, Merseyside has a close association with north Wales, and always has had. I know that the people of Merseyside are anxious about what has taken place in north Wales, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's remarks about it.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the aspect of the Bellwin rules that has to do with not covering buildings which could have been covered by insurance? May it not be much more prudent for a council to cover damage to buildings out of its contingency fund rather than pay insurance premiums which, in the long run, are designed to make a profit for insurance companies?

Mr. Walker: In fairness to my hon. Friend, there is available to local authorities insurance by an insurance company which has a mutual arrangement with local authorities and is non-profit making. Therefore, to some extent, if local authorities, find the premiums competitive, they have the opportunity to go to a mutual insurance company.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): In a simple spirit of Celtic comradeship, may I congratulate the Secretary of State for Wales on the efforts that he is clearly making? I contrast that with the actions of the Scottish Office and the Secretary of State for Scotland. I wonder if the right hon. Gentleman will have a word in his right hon. and learned Friend's ear. I have raised this matter with the Leader of the House on business questions on the past two Thursdays, because we have now had private notice questions answered by the Department of the Environment in the case of flooding in England, and by the Welsh Office for flooding in Wales. However, more than a month after severe disruption and distress was caused by flooding in various parts of Scotland, we have yet to hear anything orally from the Scottish Office. What is it that the Secretary of State has got that our man lacks?

Mr. Walker: I can only say that I have every admiration for the action that my right hon. and learned Friend takes, and I regard the hon. Gentleman's question as based not on Celtic affection, but on party advantage.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Bruce. Is this still about Wales?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Will my right hon. Friend accept that I echo everything that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has said? The sea defences throughout Wales, England and Scotland are in poor repair. I particularly emphasise that enormous grants are available from the Welsh Office, the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Transport, county councils and district councils. However, often when people face problems they do not know who is supposed to deal with the matter, or where to get the grant.

I ask my right hon. Friend whether he could urgently discuss with his Cabinet colleagues having a single agency, with a single grant, to undertake this type of work, so that all the confusion is washed away, rather than our constituents being washed away. Certainly the people of Weymouth and Swanage have found in the past few weeks, exactly as the people of north Wales have, that this is not a pleasant experience, and we need to get it sorted out.

Mr. Walker: I think that the Welsh experience is different, because there is one Welsh Office to assess the whole range of functions required. I shall certainly convey to my right hon. Friends my hon. Friend's remarks about the position in England, and about the combination of grants available.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): May I offer 100 per cent. support to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who always guards his constituency in an exemplary fashion? May I also welcome back the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) from hospital? We all appreciate the praise that the right hon. Gentleman has given to the emergency services. He knows that they have been absolutely magnificent.

Does the Secretary of State agree that, with a 200 m breach in the sea wall, with the sewage pumps out of action, with more than 400 m of inland flooding, with a 10 m tide at a quarter past noon today, and with more than 900 people officially evacuated—and I am informed that the water level is still rising—this is a definition of a major disaster, as the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West stated in his original question? Financial aid on a large scale, and a specific commitment this afternoon, are now required.

The Secretary of State should carefully consider the lack of a rail link between Holyhead and Chester. I should like him to tell the House his estimate of when the rail link will be restored, because the island of Anglesey's economy almost totally depends on that link. I am informed that it may be many weeks, and I should like to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that he has considered urgent action to restore the link, and has even considered asking the Army to help.

Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that we are looking for a specific commitment of new money in major quantities today to enable north Wales to face up to a major disaster?

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the tributes that he paid to my hon. Friends, and to the emergency services, with which I agree. He mentioned the railway. He will be well aware, as a former Minister in the Welsh Office, that if further flooding has taken place at noon today, there is no way that I can at this point estimate the magnitude of the damage and what is required.

I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is a necessity for the economy of Anglesey and other parts of north Wales, for the damage to the railway system to be tackled as speedily as possible. Obviously there will be talks with British Rail and any assistance that we can give, we will give enthusiastically.

As far as the general scene is concerned, which the hon. Gentleman describes as a major emergency, certainly from all the information that I have and from a recent phone call to the Minister of State, I agree with that assessment. I have no doubt that substantial grants will be available from the Government to virtually all the district councils concerned, because sums will exceed certain limits.

I am very pleased that agreement was reached with the local authorities, and that, in the event of such emergencies, they will now know that the Government will respond speedily. In the past—including the period during which I was Secretary of State for the Environment—Governments of all persuasions engaged in lengthy assessments and deliberations about exactly what was necessary and how the matter should be dealt with. Now help will be automatic, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Welsh Office, recognising the importance of north Wales, will play its part in ensuring that speedy remedial action is taken.

Hospitals (Expenditure)

3.50 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for not giving you notice of this point of order, but I believe that there is a rule that, unless such matters are raised at the first available opportunity, it may not be possible to raise them at all.

It is, I think, a well-known principle that no moneys can be expended by Her Majesty's Government other than those that lie within their power by Act of Parliament or a Vote in the House of Commons. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), during questions to the Prime Minister, referred to expenditure of £100 million in relation to opt-out hospitals. In replying, the Prime Minister did not dissent from my hon. Friend's proposition; indeed, she mentioned that the hospitals would not become self-governing until the necessary Act had been given Royal Assent.

Can you, Mr. Speaker, give me some guidance—either now or at a later date—on the prima facie case that some money, although perhaps not £100 million, has been spent for that purpose before Royal Assent had been given to a Bill that is still being considered by the House?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not responsible for answers that are given by Ministers, and it is not for me to look into such matters. If an incorrect statement has been made, however, I am sure that there are other ways of putting things right.

Relief of Planning Blight

3.51 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to minimise the effects of planning blight by establishing a maximum period of time within which compulsory purchase of land and property by local authorities and other statutory undertakers must be effected.

One minute a person may be minding his own business and caring lovingly for his garden; the next minute, crash! —the JCB turns up and starts to take away the hedge to make way for a new motorway. That is the ultimate home-owner's nightmare: it might be called the Arthur Dent syndrome.

This may seem far-fetched, but some people find that such events have a terrible habit of creeping up on them, unexpected and unannounced. Others are caught in a trap, not knowing whether to fight the road proposals through the courts, sell their property immediately at a loss or wait until the scheme is completed before claiming the maximum compensation. In every case, however, the home owner seems to be on a loser.

Compulsory purchase, blight and compensation are now among the critical issues of our expanding and developing economy. Economic growth has meant that we have more vehicles and more road and rail congestion, especially in densely populated areas such as the south-east. There is a growing conflict between Government aspirations to improve road and rail infrastructure, and the deep-rooted desire of property owners who are in the way of such developments to retain the status quo. At times, it seems that "not in my back yard" has been crystallised into "over my dead body": an example is the resistance to the demands of the Channel tunnel rail link and the south London inner orbital road.

Attempts have been made recently to take a fresh look at the problem. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors published its blue book last March, and the Government's consultation document came out at about the same time. Both publications proposed helpful and constructive amendments to the law, but so far the Government have not found time to present the necessary legislation. My Bill is a modest attempt to chivvy them along towards vital reform—not merely to give property owners a fairer system to speed up their receipt of rightful compensation, but to facilitate the acquisition of the necessary land to complete our new roads. If we are to have any chance of completing our £15 billion 10-year new road investment programme, we really must accelerate the process of acquiring land.

There are five areas of unfairness in the present system. First, compensation can often only be claimed once a precise route has been chosen. However, years may elapse between the reports and studies and the final decision. Secondly, when a route has been chosen, owners have to show that the property would have to be compulsorily purchased in order to claim the compensation. They are then entitled to a home loss payment, but only if they have occupied the property for five years.

Thirdly, if they tried to sell but were offered only a reduced price, they could serve a blight notice. In that instance, they would forfeit the right to the home loss payment. Fourthly, owners who do not need to be bought out have to wait for 12 months before they can claim compensation for injurious affection. No backdating or interest is payable. Finally, there seems to be no compensation under the law to cover the element of compulsion that is involved and recognition that the claimant is an unwilling seller.

Some of these problems were brought home to me as a result of the Government's White Paper "New Roads by New Means". Two of the proposals affect my constituency: the dualling of the A47 between Peterborough and Norwich and the partial dualling of the A10 north of Cambridge. As for the A47, under the Town and Country Planning and General Development Order 1988, the Department of Transport informed the local authorities. Development is now effectively banned in a corridor 67 m wide on each side of the existing roadway. That has effectively blighted all the properties along that corridor. I ought to declare an interest, as my property is one of those in the corridor.

The property owners have not been told anything. That is an oversight and it needs to be rectified. My Bill would make it mandatory for a local authority that receives such a notification to publish it and to advise all interested property owners within the defined corridors.

The question is far more serious for owners where the Department of Transport has not yet determined the line of route, although feasibility studies or reports on potential routes have been made public, thus allowing a cloud of blight to descend over large areas of high-density housing. A relevant example is the case of the London assessment studies, which will take several years to receive official sanction. Owners are not entitled to compensation and will not be in a position to serve blight notices within that period, which could be up to two years. Projected road corridors are up to about half a mile wide, and it is calculated that 20,000 homes may be affected. In order to mitigate such effects, my Bill would require firm decisions to be made on projected routes within a year of studies being published. That would put a time limit on uncertainty and, I hope, would deter ill-considered studies.

The principal way in which compensation can be assessed and paid out well in advance of statutory work starting is via the vehicle of blight notices. Their purpose is to compel authorities to purchase land in advance of their needs in order to mitigate hardship to property owners. That can be done under section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. The owner has to satisfy stringent conditions and can serve a notice only once the statutory stages of a scheme have started. The owner also has to prove a genuine attempt, without success, to sell the property at a reasonable price on the open market. The latter requirement causes hardship and seems to be unnecessary. My Bill would remove the requirement to prove an unsuccessful attempt to sell.

The second provision is section 248 of the Highways Act 1980. It gives discretionary powers to the Department of Transport and other highway authorities. There are many complaints that the stringent rules are too harsh and too readily applied. In order to speed up the process and provide a fairer system for owners, my Bill would remove the requirements of previous intention to sell and proof of an unsuccessful attempt to sell. Owners are hardly willing sellers in those circumstances.

Two outstanding issues are those relating to payments for home loss and injurious affection. Home loss payments are available under sections 29 to 33 of the Land Compensation Act 1973, but at present they can be

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claimed only by owners who have lived in their houses for five years or more. The payments are automatic for compulsory purchase, but they are not made when a blight notice has been served. The current payment is 10 times the rateable value. However, after the change next April from the domestic rating system to the community charge, that will no longer apply. The Government are therefore proposing a flat rate of between £1,200 and £1,500.

The levels of payment are frankly inadequate; I commend to the Government the recommendations of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors for an additional allowance to compensate for the factors of compulsion and in recognition of the fact that the claimant is an unwilling seller.

My Bill makes home loss payment available to owners who have served an effective blight notice, as I see little difference between those owners and those on whom compulsory purchase has been served. Owners would qualify for home loss allowance after only one year's residence. Injurious affection which is covered under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973 concerns those properties affected by the development but which are not needed for the construction. At present, the owner cannot claim until one year has elapsed after the works have been completed. The Government have so far turned down requests to alter or shorten the time scale. Under the old rating system, an owner could apply for a reduction in the rateable value, but after April 1990 that will not be possible.

The time scale in which owners can obtain financial redress seems unreasonable and limited in scope. My Bill recommends that an assesament of the level of compensation is made after six months, and 60 per cent. of that amount is paid up front. The full assessment would take place after two years, with the balance of compensation payable, incuding adjustments with interest backdated on the outstanding payment.

The issues on compulsory purchase and compensation are extremely complicated and need immediate review and amendment. The payment of speedier and more realistic compensation is not a charter for over-the-top payments to a few homebuyers. The system needs to be made fairer, and in doing that the Government's aims to improve the infrastructure will be achieved more efficaciously and with less opposition.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Bob Dunn and Mr. Roger Knapman.

Relief of Planning Blight

Mr. Malcolm Moss accordingly presented a Bill to minimise the effects of planning blight by establishing a maximum period of time within which compulsory purchase of land and property by local authorities and other statutory undertakers must be effected: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 84.]

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice (International; Co-operation) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

4.2 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I venture to think that this is one of those occasions when there will be little disagreement in the House about the importance of a Bill. The small number of hon. Members present demonstrates not the lack of importance of the measure, but the lack of political controversy surrounding it.

The House needs no reminding of the menace posed to society by drug trafficking and other types of international crime, and the international community has to work against those whose trade is the misery of others.

The Bill is composed of two distinct but closely related parts. Each deals with international co-operation and each will enable the United Kingdom to ratify an important international convention. Each will demonstrate our willingness to co-operate with other countries in fighting international crime and provide us with the means to give assistance to other countries and receive assistance from them.

Part I is concerned with the generality of international crime and co-operation between this country and others over obtaining evidence for use in criminal proceedings.

We have made much progress in recent years in international co-operation on criminal justice. The passage of last year's Extradition Act brought our extradition laws fully up-to-date. When we ratify the European convention on extradition in the next few months, it will become simpler to return fugitives from justice to convention countries so that they can face trial in the countries which they fled.

It is also now possible for us to seize the assets of those who have deposited their ill-gotten gains in this country, having committed crimes abroad, thereby enforcing other countries' confiscation orders as a result of agreements made with them. Thirteen such agreements have been concluded—11 on drugs and two on serious crime generally—and more are in the pipeline.

Power to confiscate assets and power to extradite are not enough in themselves—we must also ensure that the evidence needed to secure a conviction can be brought before the courts, either in this country or overseas. Our law has remained unsatisfactory.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Secretary of State explain our extradition arrangements with the United States, particularly in respect of the two people involved in the Peter Cameron-Webb scandal on the stock exchange more than five years ago? Peter Cameron-Webb and his mate got away with about £40 million. According to reports, neither of them—they are living in the lap of luxury in America—has even had his collar felt. We are now told that it is too late to extradite them to face justice

in Britain. Will the Bill do anything to ensure that those two people are brought to justice for one of the biggest financial scandals in this country?

Mr. Waddington: This is not an extradition Bill. Last year, we passed an important Bill to bring our extradition laws up to date. It dealt with the circumstances appertaining at that time and with those that may arise following its enactment.

Britain is one of only a few countries in the Council of Europe that have not ratified the European convention on mutual assistance, which was drawn up as long ago as 1957. The historic reliance of our courts on oral evidence and the inadmissibility of written evidence obtained from overseas have been the principal reasons for that, not negligence, but following the changes to the laws of evidence made by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Criminal Justice Act 1988, written evidence is now far more likely to be acceptable to a court, and the time has come for us to recognise the advantages of ratification and to follow the practices of others.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the Bill make it easier for us to extradite citizens of the Irish Republic?

Mr. Waddington: I explained that the Bill does not deal with extradition. In recent years, we have updated our criminal justice law, including our law on extradition.

Clauses 1 and 2 deal with the service of judicial documents such as summonses. Clause 1 creates a more effective means than is currently available by which summonses and other judicial documents issued by a court overseas can be served on a person in the United Kingdom. Clause 2 is a reciprocal provision making it possible for summonses to be served on people who are outside the United Kingdom, requiring them to appear as witnesses or defendants in criminal proceedings in this country.

Clauses 3 and 4 deal with the taking of evidence in one country for use in proceedings in another. Clause 3 makes it possible for courts and prosecuting authorities in this country to issue letters of request, seeking evidence from overseas which is needed in connection with an investigation or proceedings under way here. Clause 4 enables us to respond to such requests from overseas by having the evidence requested taken in a court in this country and then transmitted back to the country which made the request.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the slight concern that clause 4 may override a privilege that was granted by section 144 of the Finance Act 1989? I recognise that that is a rather esoteric question and it is not one on which I seek an immediate response.

Mr. Waddington: That point will be dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State in his reply. I do not think that it affects the question of privilege. The court will apply the same rules in connection with privilege as it does now. My right hon. Friend will be able to develop that point in his summing up.

Clauses 5 and 6 concern the temporary transfer of prisoners from one country to another to give evidence or to assist with investigations. Clause 5 will enable us, with the consent of the individuals concerned, to transfer prisoners held in United Kingdom prisons to another country where they will be held in custody, brought to a court to give evidence and then transferred back to this country. By the same token we shall be able to receive on a temporary basis prisoners held abroad who are needed to give evidence in cases before courts here.

Clauses 7 and 8 enable the police in certain circumstances to seek a warrant from a magistrate authorising the use of powers of entry, search and seizure at the request of the authorities in another country to assist with an investigation or proceedings taking place there.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Home Secretary vet such applications himself? Will there be political supervision of such requests so that the authorities in this country can be assured that the request coming from overseas legal authorities is satisfactory and that there is a case to be answered?

Mr. Waddington: That would not be a matter for the politicians—I sincerely hope not. If it were, I am sure that many hon. Members would complain. This is a matter for the courts of the land, whether magistrates or Crown courts. Judges will decide whether the application is properly brought under the law of this land and in accordance with the convention.

In drafting the provisions, we have been guided by the principle that no more powers should be available to be used by foreign courts and prosecuting authorities than would be available to our courts and prosecuting authorities in a purely domestic case. I am sure that that will give some reassurance to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). It is a good example of the point that I am making. With this in mind, we have set out to replicate the domestic provisions contained in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and in Scottish common law. Thus a foreign authority will be able to ask our police to enter premises to search for evidence relevant to an investigation only if the police could act in a similar way in a domestic case.

Clause 9 deals with the forfeiture of what are known as "instrumentalities" of crime—objects used in the commission of an offence. As I have already mentioned, we have strong laws governing the confiscation of the proceeds of serious crime and have agreements with several countries covering the enforcement of each other's confiscation orders. But one thing that we are currently unable to do is to enforce orders made by overseas courts for the forfeiture of items used in the commission of serious crimes, such as a getaway car used in a bank robbery or a boat used to smuggle drugs. The clause will remedy that weakness.

I am sure that the House will recognise that the proposals I have outlined are sensible and practical, and will enhance our ability to work with our international partners in the fight against all forms of international crime. Our ratification of the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters will be not only a positive demonstration of our commitment to work as closely as possible with our Council of Europe partners, but a guarantee that the other parties to the convention will assist us.

Part II contains provisions that are necessary to enable us to ratify the United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The convention is known as the Vienna convention. It begins with a code of offences of illicit trafficking, and then

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provides mechanisms that enable states to co-operate with each other in bringing traffickers to justice, wherever they may be. It also provides for the tracing, freezing and confiscation of property derived from trafficking, which we already know to be a very powerful weapon. The convention also provides a framework of practical measures to assist the law enforcement agencies to detect traffickers. Clauses 12 and 13, together with schedule 3, for example, are designed to prevent the diversion to illicit use of a range of chemicals that are essential in the production of controlled drugs.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Why does clause 12 create the offence of manufacturing or supplying certain substances that are scheduled, rather than simply making it an offence knowingly to manufacture substances that may be used in the illicit manufacture of controlled drugs?

Mr. Waddington: It is very much more satisfactory to list those substances that we know are used in the manufacture of controlled drugs and then include an order-making power in the Bill. The Bill could hardly cover substances that do not exist. It would be very difficult to frame a clause specifying that any substances that might subsequently turn out to be ones that could be used in the manufacture of drugs should be covered by the Bill. That is why, if my hon. Friend turns to clause 12(5), he will find that the schedule may be amended by Order in Council. I think that that is a satisfactory way of dealing with the matter.

In the United Kingdom, since 1971, we have operated a voluntary system of control whereby the companies that manufacture and supply these chemicals have been encouraged to draw to the attention of the police and the Home Office drugs inspectorate details of any suspicious orders and transactions.

That system has worked well, with admirable co-operation from the chemicals industry, and this has led to the identification of many clandestine laboratories, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. We do not see the need to switch to a mandatory reporting system on American lines. What the Bill will do, therefore, is put the current voluntary system on a statutory basis, in that it will require records of transactions to be kept and will empower enforcement officers to enter premises and demand the production of records.

Clause 14 is intended to enable us to meet the terms of article 3 of the Vienna convention. This requires parties to the convention to make it an offence to conceal or disguise property, or to convert or transfer it, knowing or suspecting it to be the proceeds of drug trafficking, and for the purpose of helping someone to avoid being prosecuted for a drug-trafficking offence. We already, of course, have a money-laundering offence in section 24 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, but the new offence will catch the drug trafficker laundering his own proceeds, whereas the provision in the 1986 Act is about laundering the proceeds of someone else's trafficking.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I apologise to my right hon. and learned Friend for interrupting him, but I should like to know whether the reason for including this clause is that some drug companies have not co-operated with the Government by supplying voluntarily the information whose provision we are now making compulsory.

Mr. Waddington: A very good voluntary system operates. That is why we do not consider it necessary, in this Bill, to go through the paraphernalia of requiring notification of dealings in any of these drugs. Therefore, in the Bill we are merely providing for what goes on at present. Companies keep records of these goods and can keep authorities informed of any transactions that they believe are in any way suspicious. There is no question of our putting in the Bill anything that is unnecessary. We are including the minimum that is required to conform with the convention.

Clauses 15 and 16 will enable us to meet fully the requirement of the convention that we should ensure that the maximum possible amount of the proceeds of drug trafficking—and any income derived from them—is confiscated. To do this, we need to make two adjustments to the confiscation scheme established under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. The first is to make it possible to add interest to the amount that remains unpaid at the end of whatever time a court allows for payment when it makes an order for the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking. Clause 15 achieves that. The second thing that we must do is to make it possible to increase the amount that can be recovered under a confiscation order if it turns out that the amount that might be realised is greater than was initially assessed by the Crown court. That will be achieved by clause 16.

The Vienna convention also requires parties "to co-operate" to the fullest extent possible to suppress illicit drug trafficking by sea and each party is required to establish jurisdiction over offences of illicit trafficking on its own registered vessels.

Clause 17 extends to British ships all drug trafficking offences—all those existing before the Bill comes into force as well as those that we are creating—and clause 18 creates——

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman a question in relation to clauses 17 and 18? By "British ships" does he mean United Kingdom-registered merchant vessels, United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels and pleasure craft owned by United Kingdom nationals? What is meant by an unregistered ship?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right in his assumption. Clearly the Bill covers all United Kingdom ships—all those that are registered as United Kingdom ships and all those that fly the British flag. But the Bill must also cover circumstances in which, negligently or for a criminal purpose, someone has failed to register his ship with any nation. There would be a gap in the Bill if provision were not made to deal with that eventuality.

Dr. Godman: But what happens to a British-owned vessel that flies a flag of convenience?

Mr. Waddington: I think that in those circumstances, the ship would be treated as a ship registered with that other country. The convention would be apt to give us the power, with the consent of the other country, to board that ship. It would also give us extraterritorial jurisdiction to bring to trial anyone on board that ship against whom there was evidence of a drug offence.

Clause 18 creates a new offence in respect of the transportation of illicit drugs which will apply to the ships

of convention countries and to unregistered ships, as well as to those registered here. Clause 18(2) provides that the offence is committed if a person knows, or has reasonable grounds to suspect, that the drugs are intended to be imported, or have been exported, contrary either to section 3(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 or to the law of any other state.

Clause 19 and schedule 3 create arrangements whereby the United Kingdom may authorise other countries to board our ships and we may be authorised to board other ships. We in the United Kingdom do not require any authorisation to board an unregistered ship, but the Bill makes it clear that in the case of ships registered in convention states boarding may take place only at the request, or on the authorisation, of that country. Subsection (4) empowers the Secretary of State to seek such authorisation or authorise the boarding of United Kingdom vessels by other convention states. But in giving his authority the Secretary of State will be able to attach conditions. For example, he might wish to limit local prosecution of any offences discovered to ensure that they are offences broadly covered by United Kingdom law or to ensure that punishments seriously out of step with those allowed by our laws are not imposed.

Clause 21 deals with extradition and makes a number of adjustments to our laws to ensure that we are fully able to meet the requirements of the Vienna convention.

Clause 22 applies to offences created by the Bill certain provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 in relation to existing drugs offences. For example, it extends the powers of enforcement officers in relation to searching and obtaining evidence in respect of controlled drugs to cover the chemical substances in schedule 2.

No one can doubt that the United Kingdom—indeed the whole international community—faces a terrifying prospect unless we can prevent the drug problem from escalating further. In my recent visit to the United States I saw at first hand the misery that has been wrought by drugs. The most powerful memory that I brought back with me was of a class of five-year-olds having the "say no to drugs" message drummed into them, lest even as young children they should be targeted by and fall victim to the drug pushers. In the four days I was in the United States two law enforcement officers were murdered. One murder was clearly committed because the victim was carrying out a major investigation into the activities of a drugs cartel. The other died serving a search warrant on someone not directly involved in drugs-related crime but high on drugs at the time. In the past year in Colombia, we have seen how the drug cartels have felt sufficiently sure of themselves to wage war against a democratically elected Government. President Barco's courageous stand has won universal admiration. We must make sure that he is given all the assistance that he needs to defeat these evil men who corrupt our children and the very fabric of our society.

There is no simple solution to this problem. That message came across clearly in the debates at last week's special session of the United Nations General Assembly, which adopted a comprehensive global plan of action. But any plan depends on the level of commitment given to making it succeed. In the few months since I became Home Secretary it has become clear to me that one of our top priorities must be to reduce the demand for illicit drugs, for without a market the drug barons would soon be out of business. That is why we set up the new drug prevention initiative which will muster the forces of the communities most at risk. But we must also continue to be vigilant and energetic in reducing illicit supply.

As the House knows, the world ministerial drugs summit, which we are organising in association with the United Nations, is due to take place in London between 9 and 11 April. Particular attention will be given to how to strengthen the effectiveness of demand reduction policies. We will also examine ways of reducing supplies of cocaine —which are reaching western countries in ever-increasing quantities. We are determined that the conference should have a tangible outcome, and complement the recent discussions in New York and last month at Cartagena when President Bush met the Presidents of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru.

The need for concerted international action is also reflected in the report on drug trafficking and related serious crime prepared last November by the Home Affairs Select Committee. This is an excellent document and we shall respond shortly to its recommendations. In the meantime I reiterate my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and his colleagues for their painstaking work.

But the Bill is not just about drugs. It is about enhancing our ability to tackle international crime generally by allowing us to work more closely with our international partners. The two conventions that the Bill will permit us to ratify are useful and important instruments and I know that our ratification will be very welcome in the international community which has long looked to Britain to take a lead in the fight against crime and has not looked in vain.

4.29 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): It almost goes without saying that Opposition Members give the Bill our full support, following not only our commitment to it but the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition when the Bill was first announced. Any measures which are carefully devised and thought through, and which tackle international crime in general and the murderous trade of drug trafficking in particular, will be wholeheartedly supported by the Opposition. That applies to this Bill, which is not controversial. I shall therefore also try to be reasonably non-controversial.

Mr. Lawrence: This is an important matter and it has come to the attention of most of us that the hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), again, is not here to hear the introduction of a Home Office Bill being presented by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The right hon. Gentleman cannot still be out to lunch at 4.30 pm.

Mr. Sheerman: That was an appalling intervention. Had I known that the hon. and learned Gentleman intended to make a dishonourable reference to my right hon. Friend, I should not have given way to him. My right hon. Friend is engaged on other important business. The Opposition are used to working as a team. Part of that team is here now and doing its job. We do not rely on one figure, as the Government often so obviously do. We work as a team.

The structure and ramifications of the Bill are complex, but the objective is simple—to deal with international

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drug-related crime. We believe not only that the bill will enhance the ability of the Government and their police force—and other police forces around the world—not only to tackle more effectively the increasingly sophisticated and globally active drug barons but, more broadly, that it will enable proper international arrangements to be agreed on criminal matters generally. It is important for the House to note that the Bill is not just about dealing with the drugs barons or the drugs traffickers.

Part I of the Bill relates to international crime. Again the Opposition welcome the abilities that it offers to the Government and police forces because crime is becoming global. Crime which starts off as a drug-related crime soon becomes a different type of crime as the money moves into different areas, different industries and different activities, not all of which are associated directly with the drugs trade. As the Home Secretary said, part I deals with mutual legal assistance—a formal tag for a simple procedure. It allows procedures by which states can co-operate with each other in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences. It will allow us to ratify the 1987 European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters, which is most important.

Our main worry about part I relates to clause 4 and specifically to a protocol to the convention which allows a foreign Government to require our Government—and which in turn allows us—to require a banker to reveal information about a fiscal matter which, while a criminal offence in the originating country, is a civil offence here. That issue arose on Second Reading and in Committee in another place and it is a point on which we seek further clarification. I stress that we are concerned that something which originates as a criminal offence in another country, especially relating to fiscal matters and to tax avoidance, may be a civil matter in this country. I know that there is a worry on both sides of the House that there could be a country somewhere in the world where unscrupulous individuals could use the provisions as a lever to gain information. That was not the intention of the protocol. I hope that the Minister of State will mention that in his reply. Certainly we shall return to the matter in Committee.

The Home Secretary will know that eight countries have signed the protocol and four—Austria, Norway, Sweden and Iceland—have expressed reservations about the fiscal provisions. If we express a similar reservation, it will not prevent us from signing the convention. We know from proceedings in another place that the Government argue that it is in our own interest to sign the convention in toto. However, we should like the Minister to give an undertaking that no future Home Secretary would allow another country's law to change our law.

Having dealt with part I of the Bill which, as I said, is the less contentious section of a Bill to which we have given broad support. Part II of the Bill, as the Home Secretary said, allows us to ratify the 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. That is quite a mouthful, but we all know what it means. In short, it means ratification of the Vienna convention. There have been various treaties and conventions signed in Vienna, some of which have proved more successful in historical terms than others.

We welcome the clauses in part II dealing with the manufacture of precursors. I have talked to people in the chemical industry and the Select Committee also touched on the subject. I appreciate that it is a difficult issue, but we must attempt to control the raw materials used in processing coca into cocaine. There has been a cry from countries and from statesmen and stateswomen in south America and central America to control the sophisticated chemicals—the precursors—which come in from the United States and Europe and other parts of South America. That is a difficult matter and there is a certain pessimism in the chemical manufacturing industry about the efficacy of this measure and whether it will be the answer. Nevertheless, part of the answer is to control the flow of chemicals into countries where they are used to manufacture cocaine.

We also accept the need to tighten the law against money laundering. The Bill makes provision to tackle the illicit trafficking of drugs by sea and to ensure that drug trafficking offences are extraditable. The Home Secretary mentioned clause 21, which firms up existing provisions and improves the current position.

The one controversial aspect of my remarks involves money laundering. The Opposition are worried about this because the Bill's provisions for tightening the offence of money laundering are important and will be of great assistance to the police. I do not deny that, and no other Opposition Member would do so. However, we remain concerned about money laundering and whether the Government are doing enough about it, even in the Bill. Perhaps the Bill can be improved in Committee.

In a report published in November, "Drug Trafficking and Related Serious Crime", the Select Committee on Home Affairs said:

"The United Kingdom continues to be a major centre for money laundering."

Indeed, the national drug intelligence co-ordinator, the NDIC, told the Committee that the United Kingdom

"was regarded by the United States, Canada and some others as an offshore banking system."

That is a serious allegation from a body so close to the fight against drug-related crime.

That relates to some degree to the scandal of the Bank of Commerce and Credit International. The BCCI has 40 branches in the United Kingdom. In Tampa, Florida, this month that bank was convicted, having pleaded guilty, of three serious charges of conspiracy relating to money laundering and was fined between $14 million and $15 million. In a recent television programme that fine was described as a slap on the wrist for a bank involved to that extent in the money laundering business.

When I raised that issue with the Foreign Secretary recently, I was rather slapped down by the right hon. Gentleman, who was within a few days to attend a special assembly of the United Nations to discuss the drugs issue. I asked whether he thought that he might be taken more seriously at that assembly if he did something more energetic about money laundering. He replied:

"The hon. Gentleman's rhetoric is about four years out of date. This Government have been the pioneers in putting the necessary legislation through Parliament, in bringing that legislation into effect, and in negotiating agreements—of which there are now 13—with countries that have followed the same route."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. 882.]

The right hon. Gentleman rather slapped me down, which concerned me in view of what was said the previous night—I have the transcript with me—in a BBC "Newsnight"

programme. Hon Members who are familiar with that programme will be aware that each programme involves an in-depth investigation of a particular topic. In the programme to which I refer, the laundering of drugs money and the various ramifications involved—*[Interruption.]* I have faith in that programme. Indeed, unlike some Conservative Members, I have great faith in the BBC. That programme went in some depth into the Tampa case and the involvement of the BCCI. It posed some awkward questions about whether the British Government and the Bank of England were taking seriously the amount of laundering that was going on in British banks every day of the week. It is estimated that £1·8 billion of drugs money comes to this country.

Mr. Waddington: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to go on in that way, but may we be told what amendment to the law he is proposing? What does he say is wrong with the drug trafficking offence that we pioneered? I should have thought that he would wish to give credit for the initiative that the British Government have taken. To the best of my knowledge, we were one of the first countries in the world to create a money laundering offence.

Mr. Sheerman: I regard the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, which the Opposition supported enthusiastically, as an important first step. The Select Committee and others have expressed great concern—the point was put to the Bank of England when it gave evidence to the Committee—about the amount of laundering that is going on and about the fact that the present legislation is not catching much of it.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I was a member of that Select Committee. We visited bankers in Washington and spoke to the Customs and Excise. They expressed anger at the fact that it is possible for anyone legally to bring a suitcase full of drugs money into Britain, to pay it into a bank here and to have it immediately faxed to America. Practically every other country in the world insists that when visitors arrive by aeroplane they have to fill in a form stating exactly how much cash they have on their person and there is a strict limit—$1,000, or whatever, I am not certain of the figure—on how much they may bring in. In Britain there is no such limit—anyone can bring in any amount of money. That is why the Americans are angry about our lack of holding operations. We cannot detain people for, say, 24 hours while inquiries are made. That loophole in the law affects not just the Home Office but the Treasury. The previous Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to do anything about it because he thought it would interfere with currency control.

Mr. Sheerman: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I was making precisely that point. We are not against the 1986 Act, but it is clear from the Select Committee report that that measure is not catching the big money. Sums as large as £15 million to £20 million are relatively small in terms of the huge amounts that are still eluding the net.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): A few moments ago my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary asked the hon. Gentleman to explain not just his criticisms of the present situation, which we understand, but what he proposes should be done. What are the Labour party's proposals?

Mr. Sheerman: In addition to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), we believe that the Government should have responded faster to the Select Committee recommendations, which were published last November. It was clear from the evidence given by the Bank of England that the Government ought to take urgent action so as more effectively to catch drug laundering money.

Mr. John Patten: The Labour party has no policies at all.

Mr. Sheerman: The Government should act following an investigation by an all-party Select Committee which exposed the scandal of Government inaction over the laundering of drug money in the City of London. The Government have not yet acted on the Select Committee's recommendations almost three months after they were made.

Although we support the Bill, we are entitled to criticise aspects of it. If we need more legislation, let it be enacted. Our fear is that the Government, who historically feel tenderness towards the City, are frightened to take the City on strongly, including telling the Bank of England that the present state of affairs is a scandal and telling the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary that something must be done.

Ministers ask about Labour policies in this sphere. New policies already exist in the form of the Select Committee's recommendations. If the Home Secretary would only act on them there would be a great improvement in the situation.

The national drugs intelligence co-ordinator estimates that £1·8 billion is received into the United Kingdom as a result of drug trafficking. The NDIC stated in a memorandum that vast sums were circulating in the legitimate banking system and might

"have a destabilising effect on the smaller financial institutions."

Those sentiments have not been conjured by by me. They come from a leading expert at the sharp end of these issues. The NDIC said that, despite the 1986 Act, the United Kingdom continued to be a major centre for laundering money. I reiterate that many countries facing this problem see Britain as an offshore banking centre.

That being so, it is no use the Home Secretary and his junior Minister being complacent. They are the responsible Ministers, they have the Select Committee report, and they should be aware of the worries that have been expressed by their officials who, I believe, are urging them to take action. Unfortunately, the Government are weak when it comes to facing City institutions. It is about time that someone kicked the Bank of England. If the Home Secretary will not have a go, he should step down. If he thinks that it is the Opposition's job, let the Government resign and we will start doing the job properly.

Some of us are worried about how effective the 1986 Act has been. I do not want to labour the point, but the laundering of drug money is the cornerstone of the drug trade. If we can deal with that, we shall have largely solved the supply-side problem. The Bill does not deal with the demand-side problem, on which the conference that the Government are hosting in London in April will focus, but if Britain can take the lead in a United Nations effort and do something about the laundering of drug money, the drug trafficker will find life much more difficult.

[Mr. Sheerman]

The laundering of drug profits through the legitimate banking system was the most disturbing part of the Select Committee investigation. When the Bank of England was asked by the Select Committee what further measures it would recommend, it could not think of any. That answer jumps out at us from the page. If the Government told the Bank of England to suggest proposals which would effectively prevent London from being a centre for the laundering of drug money, it would come back with effective measures which could be implemented quickly.

This is not a party political point. I am simply saying that it could be done. It must be possible to stop the laundering of such money and the Bank of England should have the expertise to advise the Government to do so.

We support the Bill and we shall give it a fair wind on Second Reading and in Committee, but we shall not let the Government off the hook if they refuse to give the City the big kick up the backside that it deserves with regard to the drug money laundering scandal.

This is the most controversial part of my speech and I know that the Home Secretary and the Minister of State do not like what I have said. Nevertheless, it is three months since the Select Committee published its report, so why have the Government not called in the Bank of England and told it to produce solutions? Will the Home Secretary talk to his Cabinet colleagues and find out what they are doing about the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and other banks suspected of being up to their elbows in this kind of money laundering?

The Government's decision, to judge from remarks made in another place, to shift the burden of proof rather than reversing it is welcome and is to be commended. To reverse it would be a far-reaching change in our criminal law and a dangerous precedent.

We shall be going into the detail of the Vienna convention in Committee, but I will deal with two important aspects now. Article 5(b) provides that, when acting on the request of another party, special consideration may be given to concluding agreements or contributing the value of confiscated proceeds to intergovernmental bodies specialising in the fight against illicit traffic and drug abuse. To put it more simply, if a lot of money was recovered after an international operation, it should go not into various Government's coffers or the Consolidated Fund but into a special fund to provide the resources to do the job even better. The Select Committee got that right.

I would go further than that and say that the Home Secretary should also talk to the Chancellor of the Exchequer because money recovered in Britain could be used to give a wonderful incentive to police officers and other intelligence people. They may not need that, but it would be a marked advance if money recovered from a sophisticated operation, taking many man hours and a great deal of time, energy, effort and money, went back to the police departments and investigative agencies involved. That is a simple but important concept.

A drug informer who had been a constituent of mine for a year, who was not guilty of or charged with any offence, gave information which led to the recovery of an enormous amount—three large hauls—of cocaine. I had to fight long and hard to obtain recompense and a new identity for him, and it was only after many months that I achieved that. It was not that people, having wickedly used the man, said that he could get on his bike and go, but the Home Office and the police said that there was no money available to pay for that. Progress has been made in the past two years and more money has been made available, but there is still not enough cash to fight the drug menace. Preventing the proceeds of such operations from slipping back into the Consolidated Fund would mean extra cash to fight the drug menace. It would be nice for poll tax payers facing a 13·5 per cent. increase to pay for the police to be able to think that a big recovery of drug money would go back to those who had had to spend money providing the expertise necessary to make the operation successful.

Mr. Waddington *rose*——

Mr. Sheerman: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman says anything else, will he comment on the rumour that there are millions of pounds locked up in Washington which the United States Government would like to give to the Metropolitan police but that at present there is no mechanism to do so? Will that money be payable to the Metropolitan police when the Bill is enacted?

Mr. Waddington: I sought to intervene to remind the hon. Gentleman that some time ago the Government announced that provision is being made in 1990-91 for a central fund to meet some of the additional costs of international drugs investigations by the police—including rewards to major informants—out of the seizures of illegal drug assets.

Mr. Sheerman: I thank the Home Secretary for that. I acknowledged that steps have been taken, but if money recovered flowed into such resources it would make operations against drug barons even more effective. I take the Home Secretary's point. That fund did not exist when I was battling for my transient constituent. Nevertheless, it should be a great deal more.

The Government should make it clear that confiscated funds should help towards the overall effort. The Select Committee recommended that such funds should go to a central fund administered by the Home Office. That is an excellent recommendation. I hope that the Home Secretary will respond positively in the short run. Money could then go back to the investigating agencies and—I hope that the Home Secretary will look warmly on this—to rehabilitation and education programmes. The Home Secretary has much to gain from having common cause with the Secretary of State for Health. Part of the money should go to fight the war against the drug barons and part to the education and rehabilitation programme which is so under-resourced.

Mr. Waddington: How much would the Opposition dedicate to that programme?

Mr. Sheerman: I am saying that we would——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Answer the question.

Mr. Sheerman: I am in the middle of an answer. I do not need the Parliamentary Private Secretary to tell me how to answer a question. I was about to say that I have already given the policy. The policy is that a fund should be built up from the proceeds of cracking the illicit trade. Many

millions of pounds could be used in that way. After the next election a Labour Government would take that course.

Mr. Waddington: That is not an answer to my question. If a fund is built up from money seized, that money could be used for a variety of purposes. As the hon. Gentleman is apparently criticising the budget available for education and rehabilitation, we are entitled to know what budget he has in mind and how much the Opposition would spend.

Mr. Sheerman: The point I am trying to make is that we want a substantial appropriation of funds for education and rehabilitation programmes because the drug problem is tremendously important and we have not yet taken it seriously. In a moment I shall refer briefly to demand reduction. The Home Secretary and his colleagues like to appear on television making dramatic gestures. I want to give him the opportunity to say that the drug fund would go partly towards pursuing the criminals more effectively and partly to picking up the pieces in society which result from the ghastly, murderous trade. Young children could be educated so as to prevent them getting under the thrall of drugs. There could also be educational and rehabilitation programmes for the victims of drug addiction.

In volume II of the Select Committee report, page 160, the Home Office memorandum says that article 2 of the United Nations convention makes an important point about sovereignty. I hope that the Home Secretary will bring it to the attention of the Foreign Secretary. According to the memorandum, the convention

"may even be helpful in countering the exorbitant claims to jurisdiction often made by the United States".

That was well said. Anyone who has spent time in south America will know that the people are sensitive about the United States using one rule on jurisdiction in one part of the globe and another in south America.

Article 14 of the convention relates to measures to eradicate the illicit cultivation of narcotic plants and the illicit demand for drugs. That is a worthwhile section which will be difficult to carry out. Hon. Members who take the matter seriously are worried about simplistic solutions. In a peasant economy such as Peru or Colombia, it is wrong to burn the fields of coca or attempt to introduce a caterpillar or beetle to destroy the coca crop without knowing what damage may be caused to other crops. I hope that the Government will take a positive attitude.

These matters do not relate just to the Home Office. If we are to do anything about the supply, right back to the grower, we have to face the fact that we spend very little money on overseas aid to south America. There was a little extra last year but aid for the whole of south America is only about £12 million. People in the West must get the message that they cannot burn or spray the crop from helicopters or introduce beetles to destroy it. We must offer people in the Third world alternative markets, alternative crops and alternative ways of earning a living. The simplistic solutions tried by some western countries have had appalling effects on the population.

I know only one south American country well—Peru. When one sees the poverty in Peru, one is not surprised that the peasants are forced into coca production when that is the only thing that they can grow. They must be given a genuine alternative. That does not come from helicopters or from slogans but from resources being put into alternatives to make the economy work differently.

Article 14 states that measures taken to prevent illicit cultivation should respect fundamental human rights. It puts a finger on an important point. If we are to have respect for human rights, we must give them the proper environment in which to flourish.

Article 14 also refers to the protection of the environment. We may talk glibly about the protection of the rain forests and about global warming, but we cannot criticise people who are struggling to make a living when we in the West shot the buffalo and killed half the animal species in the world when we were industrialising, and we are still the worst polluters. So when we talk about protection of the environment, we must do so sensitively.

I remember being shown the front page of the leading newspaper in Brazil the morning after a European initiative which criticised the damage to the environment caused by cutting down the rain forests. South American countries do not want to be patronised. They want to be talked to intelligently so that we and they can find solutions together. Article 14 is a valuable safeguard against spraying crops, the introduction of grubs, and so on.

I wish to conclude on the subject of demand reduction, although it is not covered by the substance of the Bill. While the Bill is important, it deals with only half the problem. Some people regard that half as the least important part of the problem because demand reduction is the most effective way of reducing the drug menace. The convention relates basically to the supply side, but we must not be preoccupied with that to the exclusion of demand at home.

When last week I criticised the Home Secretary for going to the United States, I did so constructively. He should have gone to other countries in Europe which, because of their experience, would have much more to tell us about drug culture than the United States. The experience of the United States is special in one sense, and I thank heaven it is. If the Home Secretary were to talk to his opposite numbers in Germany, Holland and France, he might learn much more than he did on his trip to the United States. The United States, to its cost, made the mistake of concentrating on the supply of drugs and did not put enough effort and resources into demand reduction until it was too late. To stem the flood of drugs, it is more effective to stem the demand from people who use the stuff than to stem the supply.

We can talk as much as we like, and we shall give the Bill a fair wind—it will not take long to get through the House—but this is a complex matter and the problem will not be solved by one short Bill or Act. Drug addiction and the drugs problem are related to supply and demand in terms of their causes. For example, I have mentioned that on the supply side there is the question of what peasants have to do in certain countries of the world. On the demand side, the drug problem is rooted in poverty, deprivation and unemployment.

Mr. Waddington: If the hon. Gentleman is right, why was there not more drug taking between the wars? If he is right about deprivation, why was there not a greater drug problem when there was far more deprivation? He is talking nonsense.

Mr. Sheerman: That is the most depressing remark that I have heard from the Home Secretary since he took office. All the informed opinion dealing with drugs and drug addiction has stressed time and again that the problem is related to deprivation and to the poor parts of our cities and towns. I am not saying that as a Labour supporter —across the political spectrum, people who know about the drugs problem are saying that. One can track it and trace it and see the hot spots in our country.

In the 1920s and the 1930s, between the wars, like most fashions it was high society and the upper classes in this country who were the drug addicts and who were involved in drug taking. The problem was small. The Home Secretary shakes his head. Yet he used to have some claim to being a social scientist—*[Interruption.]* Well, he was a geographer and they sometimes claim to be social scientists. We could have a debate about whether geography has any claim to scholarship, but not today.

I answer the Home Secretary by saying that fashions begin among small sections of the population and are perhaps harmless. When they spread down to a large section of the population who do not do it as a quick thrill and then move on, it becomes a different problem. That is what has happened in the United States and it is certainly what has happened here.

I repeat—and I beg the Home Secretary to think again —that the root of the drugs problem is in deprivation and misery, and unless the Government do something about that they will never tackle the problem completely and comprehensively.

5.12 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I shall begin by using some of the words of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). He is right to say that the extremely complex question of drugs and the control of drug-related crimes will not be solved by simplistic solutions.

The hon. Gentleman leaned heavily on the work of the Home Affairs Select Committee in his speech this afternoon. However, it seems to me that he failed to respond and to suggest what additional improvements he would make to the criminal law to deal with some of the issues. I do not mean to say that in a partisan way, but perhaps the Opposition would have been assisted if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had been present this afternoon to lend his knowledge, skill and interest in the subject to the debate. Perhaps he would have answered some of the questions posed to the hon. Member for Huddersfield, and which —I say this in a kindly way—he understandably was unable to answer.

Mr. Sheerman: I am surprised that the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs makes that point. My right hon. Friend is the deputy leader of our party, as well as the home affairs spokesman, and that imposes a great range of duties over and above the duty of being shadow Home Secretary.

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman but I repeat—in as non-partisan a way as I can—that the most important duty upon hon. Members is to attend the House and to participate in debates, particularly about issues as serious and important as this one. I leave it at that.

I greatly welcome the response to the Home Affairs Select Committee report from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. The Home Affairs Select Committee can claim to be the one Committee that receives almost instant, but considerable, response to its recommendations. My right hon. and learned Friend responded within 14 days to the Select Committee's report on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board scheme, and handsomely so.

Today's debate is in part a response to the recommendations made in November 1989 to the Home Office by the Select Committee in its report on serious crime and drugs. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend has to respond to the other recommendations in that report as soon as possible—no doubt soon after the conclusion of the debate today.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend has been extremely courteous about the rapid response that the Home Office always tries to give to Home Affairs Select Committee reports. He cited the recent report on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board scheme. However, today we are debating, in part, the Select Committee's report on drugs. Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the recommendations of his Committee, such as those impressing upon us the need to ratify the 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and the 1957 European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters, are already dealt with in the Bill?

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Committee made those recommendations in November last year, and in the brief intervening period since his Department was able to consider the recommendations.

To use the phrase of the hon. Member for Huddersfield, these are complex matters which cannot be dealt with on a simplistic basis. My right hon. and learned Friend has considered the issues, consulted the Law Officers of the Crown and the many other agencies involved, and has come forward with a Bill which I am delighted to learn will enjoy the support of the whole House, subject no doubt to some debate in Committee. It will put on the statute book the recommendations of the Select Committee which we believe—on an all-party basis—are central to the war against drugs and serious crime. I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for the way that he has responded.

I shall go through some of the issues, and touch upon some of the matters raised in the debate so far, including money laundering and the role of the Bank of England.

The Select Committee concluded that one of the most serious policy issues facing the Government and the country as a whole was that of drugs and drug-related crime. We therefore undertook an inquiry into the subject last year. We were so concerned about what we discovered about the threat of crack that we published an interim report in July 1989, to which my right hon. Friends have responded, and we followed it up with a more substantive report in November last year.

In the later report, we made it clear that we were in no doubt that law enforcement had a major role in countering the problem of drugs and serious crime, although it is not the only answer: demand reduction and the operation of the health services are also important. We also made it

clear that we were entirely opposed to the legalisation of illicit drugs, which we believe would undermine all aspects of the British strategy for tackling drugs—a strategy that the Government have well in hand.

The report stated—and the Bill echoes it—that drug trafficking is, by its nature, an international problem. It requires international action. We examined several aspects of international co-operation, and concluded that the 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances represented a milestone in international co-operation. We said that the British ratification of the treaty, which will require changes in the law, was a matter of great urgency. I am glad that the Bill has responded to that need. The report also discussed ways of combating the problem of money laundering, which has already been mentioned today. Drug trafficking, we said, is extremely lucrative and drug traffickers are motivated by greed.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield is right about the poverty in some south American countries. Where he is wrong, I think, is in suggesting that the people who live in poverty there are the same people who benefit from the drugs industry. They gain very little from it; those who gain most are people who live in other countries—principally the United States—and those involved in the manufacture of drugs and their movement round the western countries.

The report went on to say that success in tracing and confiscating assets is an important aspect of the campaign against the drug trafficker. Tracing and seizure would be more effective if some of the measures in the Bill were implemented. We suggested that the proceeds of drug profit confiscation should go to a central fund administered by the Home Office: my right hon. and learned Friend has yet to respond to that part of the report, but I know that he will do so shortly. We also spoke of the importance of intelligence gathering and effective law enforcement, within the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the European Community. After Easter, the Committee will turn its attention to policing co-operation in the Community in the 1990s.

The Committee recommended that the Government should

"instruct the Bank of England, as a matter of urgency, to examine the scale of the threat to the banking community posed by money laundering and any legislative or other changes required to counter it. We expect the banking community and others with relevant expertise to co-operate fully with this investigation. The Government should then come forward with the necessary amending legislation as a matter of priority."

I note that the hon. Member for Huddersfield was unable to produce any amendments to the law. That may be because, having read the Select Committee report, he discovered that those who gave evidence believe that British banks, building societies and other related financial service industries were co-operating to the fullest extent with the police and customs authorities in this country.

Our problem is not a failure to co-operate on the part of the banking institutions, but the more complicated question of how money is laundered internationally through the world's banking economy. It would be simple indeed if we could identify a block of money in a bank in the United Kingdom as having originated from the proceeds of illicit drug trafficking; in that event, the existing 1986 Act and this Bill would together deal with the problem.

The problem for the banking authorities is that money moves from country to country, and from one company or place of origin to another, and it is difficult for the receiving bank to identify precisely the ultimate owner of a block of money in an account. If we could discover that, it would be relatively easy to deal with the consequences.

I believe that the Bank of England must give a lead. I hesitate to suggest what it should do, but I suspect that it should cancel a licence for a bank in the City of London. Again, I hesitate to nominate a candidate, but let me venture to observe that if the world contains a bank whose principals—either directors or senior and responsible managers—have been convicted of being knowing parties to money laundering, that bank may be such a candidate.

Until those who sit on the board of a bank, or who have an executive responsibility for the management of its affairs, fully comprehend that their shareholders' interests—and its future as a bank—rest on their personal integrity and their accountability for the management of its activities, they may be tempted not to address the problem of where the money goes as seriously as we would wish. It is not for my right hon. and learned Friend, or for the Government, to instruct the Bank of England about what it should do. The Bank of England will have to accept that responsibility and take a decision.

I suspect that there will be accountability only when the Bank of England cancels the licence of a bank to act as part of the United Kingdom's banking community. But we must remember that no advantage would be gained if the bank simply shifted its operations to Paris, Frankfurt or elsewhere. The same money laundering would occur throughout the world's economic system. The Bill would strengthen international co-operation between European Economic Community countries, the police and other enforcement agencies in an effort to prevent that from happening.

I warmly welcome the proposals. They represent an important contribution to the Government's efforts to deal with international crime, especially drug trafficking. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend has visited the United States and that he has seen what I saw when I visited Washington—the impact of drug trafficking on a community and the immense destruction that it causes. I know that he was as horrified as I when he saw how young people were drawn into this evil habit and then became drug traffickers. I was present when the Washington police arrested a notorious drug trafficker—a boy of 12 who was adept at managing his business on the streets of Washington.

One also has to consider the awesome consequences for the tens of thousands of babies who are born to crack-addicted mothers, many of whom will have to be cared for in institutions for the rest of their limited lives. The problem is so serious as to require us to go to the limits of the criminal justice system. We have to achieve a correct balance between the rights of individuals and the needs of society as a whole. We enshrined an important principle in the 1986 Act by requiring the banking community to reveal the contents of bank accounts when it was believed that the proceeds related to drug trafficking. No one now believes that that was wrong. We wish to build upon that principle. However, we shall be successful only if we understand precisely the implications of all the decisions that we make and only if we win international co-operation, particularly in Europe.

[Sir John Wheeler]

The Bill is a response to the Select Committee's recommendations in November 1989. It will ensure that these important developments continue. I welcome the Bill. The sooner it reaches the statute book the better.

5.32 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I shall be extremely brief, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I congratulate the hon. Members who served on the Select Committee on their first-class report. As a comment on drug-related problems and crime that is activated by drugs, I wonder how many people died last year in the United Kingdom as a result of their addiction to crack, cocaine and heroin, compared with those who died as a result of their addiction to tobacco and all forms of alcohol.

The laundering of money is a major criminal activity which has gone largely unchecked in the United Kingdom. That problem must be tackled more rigorously and in a much more tough-minded way. I hope that the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), will answer two questions. I am pleased about the contents of clauses 17 to 20, whose object is to tackle more effectively the problems that are associated with the seaborne trade in illicit drugs. That is very important for Scotland, given the plethora of islands and its extensive coastline.

I ask the Minister to look again at those clauses. I am not a lawyer or a parliamentary draftsman, but I am a little concerned about the definition of a British-owned ship —hence my earlier intervention during the Home Secretary's speech. That vague definition needs to be tightened up when the Bill is considered in Committee. I ought to point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) that I do not expect to receive an invitation to serve on the Committee.

This is an important question; the Minister of State has with him a platoon of civil servants who may be able to answer it. How do clauses 17 to 20 relate to clauses 3 and 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988? On October 1989, the president of the European Court of Justice took issue with Her Majesty's Government on the definition of a British-owned ship. According to his interim injunction, the Government had to suspend the use of the term "British-owned" in section 14 of that Act.

Why is there no mention in clause 20 of Scotland's Law Officers? Clause 20(1) refers to the United Kingdom. Reference is made to England, Wales and Northern Ireland in subsections (2)(a) and (b), but there is no mention of the Crown Office, or the role of the procurators fiscal. Absence of any mention of the Crown Office is particularly noticeable to me.

I promised you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I should be brief. I hate to break promises to you, especially when you are sitting in that Chair. Schedule 3 relates to enforcement powers in respect of ships. I take it that, in addition to police affairs and Customs and Excise officers, the definition of an enforcement officer includes members of the fisheries protection service employed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and to members of the Royal Navy who may be called upon to apprehend a vessel in, I presume, United Kingdom, not British, territorial waters.

Under the terms of the Bill, will those enforcement officers have the right to continue the pursuit of a perceived transgressor into international waters or the waters of those nations whose coastlines front the North sea or the waters of European Community states? I understand that, under the treaty of Rome, we have joint control over the waters surrounding our coastline.

In conclusion, I am slightly concerned about the wording relating to unregistered ships. Can I assume that consultation took place with officials and elected representatives of other states within the European Community and bordering the north Atlantic? The highest degree of co-operation is required with law enforcement agencies, particularly the maritime divisions of those agencies, in the pursuit of those who would conduct seaborne trade in those dreadful drugs.

5.41 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I welcome the Bill, which will enable us to ratify the Vienna convention, and I should like to associate my welcome with that of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), the chairman of the all-party drugs misuse committee, who unfortunately is not able to be with us this evening. I know that he would have wanted to support the passage of the Bill with all his energy and commitment.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), said earlier this year:

> "There has never been a year when more effort has been made by the trafficker to bring his wretched product into Britain.".

Britain is not only a major consuming country for drugs; it is a major transit country. In 1989, our customs seized £259 million worth of illegal drugs—40 per cent. up on the previous year. The cocaine market in the United States is just about saturated, and increasingly the international drug barons are targeting the United Kingdom and Europe for a new market.

Over the past four years, cocaine seizures in Europe have risen by 600 per cent. From the peasant who grows the coca leaf in south America to the street trader in drugs, the mark-up is about 12,000 per cent. That enormous profit does not go to the peasant grower, whose life remains marginal; it does not even go to the pusher on the street, God damn him. It goes to the international drug baron and his cronies. A determined international effort is needed to uproot him.

We now have an example of how a determined international effort can work. I learnt on the news last night that "the extraditables" are now offering themselves up and surrendering to the Colombian Government, provided that they are tried in Colombia. That is a massive step forward. *The Economist* would never have believed it.

Some of us who were brought up on "Fabian of the Yard" and programmes such as "No Hiding Place" have quite a respect for our police system and our courts of law, so it was rather a shock to me, when I served on the Committee on The Criminal Justice Bill to find that our extradition procedures were so deficient. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 made useful progress, but it is embarrassing that we have not yet ratified the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters. That was established 33 years ago, perhaps even before "Fabian of the Yard". As we begin to co-operate more, partly

through the passage of this Bill, others will be more inclined to co-operate with us in the international battle against drugs.

I welcome the measures in the Bill to clamp down on precursor substances. The so-called producer countries, rather paradoxically, blame the West for their problems, because the West produces the demand for their drugs and the developed countries produce the chemicals that make up the drugs. The ex-President of Colombia said in 1989:

"Our efforts to reduce the supply of refined cocaine also depend on international co-operation in stopping the illegal trade in chemicals which are essential to the processing of this drug. Generally, much attention is given to the production and processing of drugs . . . Unfortunately, in contrast, little attention is given to controlling the supply of chemicals which are used to process cocaine and which come mainly from North America and Europe. None of these are manufactured in Colombia—all of them are smuggled into our country. Tightening controls on the manufacture and sale of these chemicals, as well as strengthening sanctions against their illegal shipment, must be one of our highest priorities. It takes more than coca leaf to produce cocaine. Without the chemicals there would be no narcotic".

I welcome clause 12, but I am inclined to ask my right hon. Friend why we have to schedule the precursor substances; why not make illegal all the substances which are used knowingly to produce illicit drugs?

I was then drawn to clause 13. I accept that scheduling is probably required to control the trade in these substances, but I do not see why it is necessary to schedule the substances for control in clause 12, as one always runs the risk of the list not being exhaustive. Casting my eyes over the list, I thought that I might have noticed that one or two chemicals were missing, such as urea. I accept that they could be added later, but there is here a potential deficiency in the Bill that could be examined more closely in Committee.

Clause 16 closes an important loophole in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 so that we will now be able to confiscate ill-gotten gains that have been concealed until late in the day. That Act has proved its worth. Last year, some £15 million-worth of assets were seized.

We are in a competitively communautaire world, and I should like to take the opportunity briefly to berate Holland, Spain and Portugal, as they have dragged their feet on producing similar legislation. However, I share a major criticism with the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) about the operation of the Bill. The money seems to disappear back into the maw of the Exchequer. Police resources which are likely to be further stretched by the operation of the Bill will not be boosted.

There is indeed a case for recycling some of the money to reduce demand. In my own town of Warrington, the drug dependency unit is severely stretched and could greatly benefit from recycling some of the money. There is even an argument for recycling some of the money to producer countries when they have been instrumental in any arrests that have been made.

The bugbear is the old Treasury doctrine of hypothecation. The preamble to the Bill says:

"The overall costs are likely not to be significant and to be more than offset by the increased revenue from confiscated assets."

The principle of hypothecation is broken in the preamble to the Bill. I hope that in practice it will be broken and that there will be proper recycling of moneys to fight the drug trade.

In previous speeches on drugs, I have called for the establishment of a national force to fight the drug barons, which, given my liking for Eliot Ness, I have tended to call "the Untouchables". I do not know whether Sir Peter Imbert reads my speeches, but I gather that he has called for a national operational arm to engage in the fight against drugs and international crime.

We should put aside regional jealousies in the fight against international criminals. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will be able to signal some favour to that general idea.

5.50 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I do not agree that regional jealousies interfere with the activities of our superb police forces, although there is an argument for increasing centralisation of drug enforcement procedures.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington (Mr. Butler) and other hon. Members who have spoken, it is not possible for me to do other than to welcome the Bill warmly. It recognises that, in criminal matters at least, we are no longer an island entire of itself; we are part of an international community, and our criminals are part of an international fraternity of criminals. All states that operate under the rule of law must act together to combat crime; otherwise, the forces of good will not prevail over the forces of evil.

Nowhere is that more true than with drugs. The raw materials for many drugs may be grown abroad and there may be distribution abroad, but there is also distribution here. There is manufacture abroad and here; there is consumption abroad and here; and the proceeds are laundered abroad and here. It comes as a surprise that, after so many years and so many international conferences, conventions, resolutions and legislation, so many loopholes and deficiencies make enforcement of the rule of law so far from complete, and not only in the drugs field.

It comes as a surprise to some of us to learn that we cannot serve on individuals in the United Kingdom summonses relating to another country's criminal proceedings, or it on ours, and that we cannot always obtain evidence from foreign countries to advance an inquiry here, of they from us. There have been notable cases of that, such as when the Swiss were reluctant to assist us in our inquiries until the point was reached when we could charge individuals, when they relaxed some of the restrictions that protect their banking system. International co-operation on such matters definitely needs to be improved.

It comes as a surprise that we are unable to transfer our prisoners to give evidence in foreign proceedings, or that foreign countries are unable to do likewise with us. It comes as a surprise that our police canot search and seize on behalf of other countries and that court orders for forfeiture of cars, guns or other equipment used in criminal offences abroad cannot be made here.

We passed the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 to fulfil a promise to seize the proceeds of drug-related crime. It appears from this Bill that we did not draft it properly or well enough. I did not realise that it was not an offence for a person to manufacture a scheduled substance or

"to supply such a substance to another person, knowing or suspecting that the substance is to be used in or for the unlawful production of a controlled drug",

which is the essence of clause 12. I am pleased that we are now making that an offence.

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

I had no idea that we had no power to enable enforcement authorities to obtain intelligence about drugs and chemicals from those who produce them. I am relieved to hear that the drug companies have given that information voluntarily, and that it is only to comply with the convention that we are making the matter statutory.

Everyone except the drug offender will be in favour of tightening the laundering proceedings. Most of the defects in the law I suspect, arise in detection and enforcement rather than in the framing of the exact law. I shall read section 24 (1) of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act – I cannot remember whether the House was better attended by lawyers at that time – to remind hon. Members of precisely what we are capable of drafting:

"Subject to subsection (3) below, if a person enters into or is otherwise concerned in an arrangement whereby—

(a) the retention or control by or on behalf of another (call him "A") of A's proceeds of drug trafficking is facilitated (whether by concealment, removal from the jurisdiction, transfer to nominees or otherwise), or

(b) A's proceeds of drug trafficking—

(i) are used to secure that funds are placed at A's disposal, or

(ii) are used for A's benefit to acquire property by way of investment,

knowing or suspecting that A is a person who carries on or has carried on drug trafficking or has benefited from drug trafficking, he is guilty of an offence."

That section cries out for clarification, and it is welcome that we are doing so.

I was a little unkind in interrupting the speech of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) to ask whether the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was on his way here. Perhaps I can make amends by supporting to a small extent a point that he was making about the feebleness of banks in dealing with laundering.

I remember that, in the Brinks-Mat gold bullion case, hundreds of thousands of pounds of gold were being taken every day to a branch of one of the leading high street banks, which paid out hundreds of thousands of pounds daily. The gold was being provided by a small trader, yet no one suspected that it might be the proceeds of the gold bullion robbery which everyone was talking about and which was all over the newpapers. There has been suspicion about some banks' lack of enthusiasm in spotting money movements in drug laundering cases as well.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*—

Mr. Lawrence: I was about to say that the hon. Member for Huddersfield probably went over the top in his attack on the banking system, but it appears that he is about to go even further over the top.

Mr. Sheerman: The point I was making is that £15 million of an estimated £1,800 million is a small percentage. I was trying to highlight the fact that we could do better and that we should expect the Bank of England to know which mechanisms it could introduce to make the high street and commercial banks more responsible in their attitudes, starting with the scandalous activities of a few banks, which should be dealt with quickly.

Mr. Lawrence: I take that point. However, it is more a matter of those who are dealing with the money having a feel for inquiry, rather than having statutory rules laid down specifically for application in every case. The hon. Member for Huddersfield has made his point, and I have done my small bit to give it some support.

I like the tightening up of confiscation orders under clause 15, so that a defendant cannot delay payment of £2 million to make about £100,000 in six months for his family and friends to enjoy. That is a sensible development.

Enabling full co-operation to take place to suppress illicit drugs being carried by ship is constructive and will, I hope, be effective. I must say, though, that one gets the impression that the coastguard and Customs and Excise forces do a very efficient job in stopping this country being invaded by drug smugglers merely because it is an island.

I want to remain in order, so I shall not be tempted to stray from the provisions of the Bill to the wider consideration of international co-operation and drug control. However, some further tribute should be made to the Government for their work to reduce drug crime and the scourge of drugs, which can so easily destroy not only the lives of individuals and children, but the fabric of our nation and the civilised world itself.

The Government have been working with locally based drug prevention teams, stimulating community action from which only good can come. They have been developing an anti-drugs campaign since it was spearheaded by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Money is spent on the distribution of information to schools and education institutions. There is active assistance in getting producer countries to reduce the growing of opium and cocaine, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South and others. We are the fourth largest donor to the United Nations fund backing enforcement programmes internationally.

The number of customs investigators has been trebled to 400 since 1979, and 450 other customs staff have been allocated to drug-related work. There is the national drugs intelligence unit, about which observation has been made, with its 17 new police regional crime squad wings all co-operating within a national organisation.

There were 38,000 seizures in 1988, which is an increase of 25 per cent. over 1987, and, if my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South is right, a 40 per cent. increase last year over the year before. The enforcement measures of our laws resulted in a record 30,500 convictions last year, which is an excellent record of anti-drugs activity by the Government, who are not complacent and who believe that more needs to be done.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I have heard that shopping list before. One always wants to encourage all efforts, but has the hon. and learned Gentleman fully thought through the whole argument about whether the Government have been successful? Although several measures have been taken, and although there is a lot of complimentary talk, the rate of drug-taking and drug abuse is growing phenomenally. How does the hon. and learned Gentleman square those two facts?

Mr. Lawrence: A great deal of effort is being expended by the Government in stopping that growth, and I have no doubt that much growth has been stopped. I am not saying that it is sufficient for the Government. The Government are not saying that it is sufficient; nor are they being

complacent. I am sure that they will continue to tackle the problem in the resolute manner in which my right hon. Friend the Minister addresses every problem. I want to pay tribute to the Select Committee on Home Affairs for its report and recommendations, which I hope will be taken up further in the months ahead.

Through the Bill, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will reduce the possibility that criminals can cross national borders with impunity. I hope that he will also be successful in his negotiations with other countries in the European Community in dealing with cross-border activities in crime and drugs.

My right hon. and learned Friend will reduce the possibility that clever criminals may take advantage of the differences in legal systems of the international community to pursue their criminal enterprises. He will increase the chance that, with international co-operation, there will be no place for the criminal to go free from the fear of prosecution and punishment. I know that that is so, because that is almost a direct paraphrase of a speech that my right hon. and learned Friend made in December 1989.

I want finally to relate to my right hon. and learned Friend the observation of an international drug baron, who asked his barrister recently what sentence he was likely to receive and how much money would be confiscated from him. When he was told that he was lucky not to have been caught in Malaysia, in Singapore or in Taiwan, where anyone flying into the country will see in the document handed to him on the plane that the penalty for drug trafficking is death, he said,

"Ah, but I would not have trafficked here in Britain if there had been the death penalty."

There must be a moral in that story.

6.5 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): In my brief comments tonight, I want to begin by saying that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) has already said, we support the Bill. We support it because of its broad aims. First, it will ratify in legislation the conventions in the fight against international crime, which have been referred to today. Secondly, the Bill will facilitate co-operation between nations. Over the years, crime has become more international, so it must be important that our institutions adjust their way of operation to help to combat international crime. Clearly, international co-operation is vital.

I can sense that we are achieving co-operation on the Bill this evening between Her Majesty's Opposition and Her Majesty's Government. Although there is a feeling of co-operation, I want to suggest constructively that the Opposition are very worried about the question of money laundering. As we are all co-operating here this evening, and as there is international co-operation, I hope that the Minister will let us know specifically what the Government intend to do about money laundering and what discussions the Government have had with the banking industry nationally and internationally, and with the Bank of England. What are the attitudes on the issue?

The reason why money laundering is so important is that drug trafficking and other aspects of international crime are very lucrative. Drug traffickers tend to be very greedy people who make huge sums. The people who make most money out of drugs are those who move the products and the money around the world. We need international co-operation to improve tracing and seizure. The problem lies in the way that money is moved around the world, and the banks themselves have terrific difficulty in establishing what money has been moved to whom. The audit trail is difficult and complex.

I welcome the valuable contribution of the Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee. Particularly welcome to me, and, I am sure, to the Minister of State, was the statement on the way in which the Bank of England had been asked to look into the whole question of money laundering and to see how the banking industry, both nationally and internationally, could make a contribution in this field. I understand that, so far, the banks have not made a statement and that the Government have not yet responded.

As there is such co-operation today on this very important issue, I am convinced that the Minister will tell us clearly what the Government's policy is on laundering and what specific steps we can expect the Bank of England to be encouraged to take, as well as what specific action will be needed internationally. No doubt the Minister of State will tell us, in particular, whether he feels that there are any parts of this Bill that need to be enhanced or strengthened following the discussions that I am sure he and the Home Secretary have had with the banking industry.

This matter has been dealt with today in a very constructive and co-operative manner. I hope that the Minister will make quite clear to the country — indeed, to the world, because this is an international problem — the outcome of discussions with the banking industry, particularly the Bank of England, and what is happening with regard to the possible withdrawal of licences from banks that fail to co-operate or are found to be operating in the money-laundering business.

I shall now conclude, anticipating from the Minister of State an answer on this important issue of money laundering. Perhaps there are some sensitivities, but to the Opposition — in particular, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield on his excellent speech — it is such an important issue that something must be done to combat it. We believe that money laundering affects adversely the efforts not only of the British Government but also of other Governments to rid the world of the evil of drug-taking.

6.11 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I cannot recall ever having followed a winding-up speech as charming as the one that has just been made. I became extremely worried — the speech was highly persuasive. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) reminded me very much of Shere Khan in "The Jungle Book". He seemed to be saying, "Trust in me, trust in me. Just give me the information. Just give me the answers."

Over recent years, I have watched the hon. Gentleman with respect, and I think that, like his hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), he really meant the support that, on behalf of the Opposition, he expressed for this Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I both welcome the Opposition's support for the general purposes of the Bill, and I am sure that we shall have some interesting and important discussions in the Standing Committee.

[Mr. John Patten]

I am sure that, just as we agree on the general principles of the Bill, we can agree also, in another rare moment of bipartisanship, how appalling it is that no Social and Liberal Democrat Member has been present during the debate. It is an utter disgrace.

Many hon. Members raised the question of international co-operation in dealing with banking problems in this context. If our international partners make no distinction between fiscal offences and other kinds of crime, it would not really make sense for us to impose such a distinction and to deny our international partners any help in connection with fiscal offences, while being willing to grant such help in all other cases. If we co-operate with other countries, if we give them the broadest possible support in dealing with offences against their laws, we can expect them to support us when we seek their help in dealing with crimes, within our jurisdiction or abroad, against our laws.

I know that a number of hon. Members, like the hon. Member for Huddersfield and my hon. Friends the Members for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) and for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), are very concerned about whether we should help to enforce other countries' tax laws and about how the Bill adds to what can be done already via double-taxation measures. The hon. Member for Huddersfield and others have voiced the fear that, in helping other countries in respect of fiscal and taxation matters, we might be inadvertently sending someone back to justice that falls below British standards.

The existing extensive network of double taxation treaties, which now includes all our European partners and nearly all other countries in Europe, already provides a mechanism for the exchange of information between tax authorities, but information obtained in this way may well not be admissible in court if someone is eventually prosecuted for a tax offence. This Bill provides a means of obtaining such evidence in a way that is much more likely to make it admissible. I do not see how anyone could reasonably object to filling so obvious a gap in our law. However, we shall pursue the point in Standing Committee if it is raised there.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield made a point about how what might be called a banana republic might make malicious use of a provision of this Bill against a British commercial interest or against a foreign national. That point is worthy of consideration, and it can be considered by the Standing Committee.

I shall not fall into the trap of debating Committee points at this stage, but I should like to draw the attention of the hon. Member for Huddersfield to clause 4(2), which provides very broad discretion as to whether we should be able to respond to requests from overseas. We shall be able to exercise this discretion in dealing with requests from other than European convention countries or from those to whom we have treaty obligations.

If we were to receive from another country a request about whose origins we had some doubt, or its bona fides, if we suspected that there was likely to be abuse of the judicial process in that country, it would be open to us to refuse to nominate a court to take the evidence requested. I think that that deals with the matter, and I hope that it will save time in Committee, when, I suspect, deliberations will get shorter and shorter as we begin to consider the relatively small number of problems posed by the Bill. By "problems" I mean the point raised by the hon. Member for Huddersfield and other matters, including the one raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), to which I shall turn in a moment.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield made a great show of being bipartisan, of saying that we were all in this together. However, he allowed the mask to slip, and was inclined to lash out from time to time. I think that, in particular, he was unfair to my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary—especially in criticising my right hon. Friend's record in trying to deal with international co-operation and money laundering. It is a record of which the whole Government can be proud.

The hon. Gentleman was also very unfair to the Home Affairs Select Committee when he used that Committee's admirable report, which was published in November, as ammunition for his arguments about money laundering in this country.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman allows me to develop the argument I shall, of course, give way. His fox was shot very quickly and splendidly by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who said that the money-laundering problems isolated in the Select Committee's report were founded not on a lack of co-operation between the banks themselves, or on a lack of co-operation between the banks and the investigative authorities, but on the very complexities of trying to track sums of money as they moved around the globe. My hon. Friend will no doubt correct me if I am wrong, but I think that I use his words more or less exactly.

In such circumstances, the problems lie in identifying the ultimate owner of the money. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Huddersfield was quite accurate in his use of the report of the Home Affairs Committee.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I thought that I had dealt adequately with the hon. Gentleman's arguments but he wants a second barrel.

Mr. Sheerman The Minister knows that we are the Opposition and that, even in the most harmonious debate, it is incumbent on us to advance arguments in opposition. I argued that, as the Select Committee pointed out, £15 million seems very small when set against the sum of £1,800 million. That was not a criticism of the Select Committee; indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who is a member of the Select Committee, intervened in support of my argument. We are merely saying that the Bank of England, after consultation with the other banks, must be able to come up with a way of doing more, more quickly. That was our point, and we believe that that should be done soon.

Mr. Patten: The Bank of England can defend itself admirably, but the criticisms of the banking system made by the hon. Members for Huddersfield and for Kingston upon Hull, West were a little unfair in view of the considerable efforts that the banks are already making to deal with precisely that problem.

Mr. Randall *rose*——

Mr. Patten: Let me just answer one point raised by the hon. Member for Huddersfield. My officials and those at the Treasury—I see that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury is here—as well as officials from Customs and Excise and other departments, are in regular contact with the Bank of England on the subject of drug trafficking and money laundering. Let me give an example. The Bank of England has been part of the United Kingdom delegation to the financial action task force set up by the economic summit to consider fresh initiatives in the fight against drug trafficking. There is no question of the Bank of England not playing an active part.

I come now to—

Mr. Sheerman: Before the Minister does that—

Mr. Patten: In that case, I had better give way to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, who rose some moments ago.

Mr. Sheerman: This concerns the specific point that the Minister was attempting to answer. Will he take away with him the transcript of the BBC's investigative programme? I know that he does not care much for the BBC, but will he show it to his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and discuss with him the serious allegation to the effect that the Government are not pushing the banking system far enough or fast enough? I should be much happier if he answered those serious allegations.

Mr. Patten: I can give the House the undertaking now that I shall look at any document that the hon. Member for Huddersfield chooses to send me, but he must not attribute to me views that I have never expressed publicly or privately about the BBC or any other broadcasting organisation. That is simply not fair of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Randall: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: Yes. Now the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West gets his chance.

Mr. Randall: May I put the record straight? The Minister will find from the report of our debate that I made no criticism of the banks. At one time, I was in banking myself and I know banking reasonably well—at least in a specialised area. What I said was that the Opposition believed that the Government could be doing more to ease the banks in a certain direction. The Minister has not told us anything. He said that discussions had taken place, but he did not say what initiatives the Government had taken to ease the banks forward to co-operate internationally to solve the problem that he so eloquently described. We are waiting to hear.

Mr. Patten: Each time I give way to the hon. Gentleman, I learn more about his fascinating career. A couple of weeks ago, in a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, I learned that he spent his early days as an engineering apprentice. I now learn of his expertise in banking.

Mr. Lawrence: He changes his job often.

Mr. Patten: As my hon. and learned Friend says, the hon. Gentleman changes his job often; I dare say that he will do so shortly after the next general election.

Mr. Randall: Oh!

Mr. Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend's response to the Home Affairs Committee will, of course, include observations concerning the matters referred to by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West. He will not have to wait very long.

Mr. Randall: Why not now?

Mr. Patten: Because my right hon. and learned Friend is following the well-precedented conventions of the House, and replying properly and in the normal way to the Home Affairs Committee's recommendations. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West is getting into a terrible muddle: he referred to a number of detailed matters raised in the Home Affairs Committee's report and not to questions arising from the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), on the other hand, did indeed refer to detailed questions raised by the Bill, and I thank him for his remarks. He was especially concerned about precursor chemicals, which are a tricky problem. The convention provides a mechanism whereby new chemicals can be added or other chemicals deleted or transferred from one table to another, and that is by resolution of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

I ask my hon. Friend to glance at clause 12, which provides a corresponding power for the schedule to the Bill to be amended so that we can introduce new precursor drugs rapidly should the need arise. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will accept that rapid mechanism.

Mr. Butler: Why is it necessary, for the purposes of clause 12, to specify drugs?

Mr. Patten: Because there is a wide range of chemicals that can be used. New chemicals are being introduced all the time and it is necessary to have the power to place them on the list. Let us take the example of the chemicals that might be used in the manufacture of cocaine. Some of the chemicals needed are commonly used. Acetone, for example, can be used as a reagent and a solvent. Those chemicals have a wide licit—I hope that the *Hansard* reporter is listening—use in many manufacturing processes and therefore to include a general blanket definition would be to use a very big-bore gun.

Mr. Lawrence: My right hon. Friend should be aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) is not alone in suggesting that such a provision may not be unnecessary. There is already a requirement in the clause that we should know or suspect that the substance is to be used for unlawful production of a controlled drug. Add to that the fact that there is a whole list of chemicals, such as acetone, which will not necessarily be used for the manufacture of a drug and one cannot but ask what on earth is the point in having a scheduled list which may end up excluding rather than including the very chemicals that one seeks to catch. I do not expect my right hon. Friend to give an answer immediately, but will he consider the matter in due course?

Mr. Patten: I do not know whether my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) wants to serve on the Standing Committee, but I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South has earned his ticket and that we shall have some debates on this in Committee.

[Mr. Patten]

The hon. Member for Huddersfield said that we were not doing enough at home or abroad. Let me give one example of what we are doing abroad. The United Kingdom is the fourth largest donor in the world to the United Nations fund for drug abuse control, and that is not a bad record. The total United Kingdom aid in the current financial year is more than £7 million, which includes £4 million that is to go to Colombia, where it will be very well used. The conference to be held in April under the chairmanship of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will do a great deal to devlop the global approach to tackling the cocaine problem in south America in particular.

In criticising our efforts at home, the hon. Member for Huddersfield was unfair to overlook the considerable budgetary provision that we make annually to try to solve the drug problem. On education, for example, some £3 million has been provided for drug prevention campaigns, some £9 million has been spent in the last four years for education campaigns in schools and a substantial sum of between £3 million and £4 million has been provided for in-service teacher training to prevent drug abuse in schools. That is terribly important in persuading children to resist the offer of a drug.

There is also my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's drug prevention initiative, which is to be area-based. He has announced that it will happen in at least nine of our cities where the drug problem is particularly bad, beginning in 1990-91. The Department of Health has earmarked some £14·5 million for drug treatment services in the current year. That is a substantial and growing amount. When we tot up all those heads of expenditure alone, they come to about £30 million.

Mr. Sheerman: I know that the right hon. Gentleman is a geographer, not a mathematician, but could we have that figure expressed as a percentage of the £1,800 million which his officials reckon is made out of drugs at present in this country? I have not worked it out—I am not a mathematician either—but it sounds like a small percentage.

Mr. Patten: We all know that it is easy for people to talk about the need to spend public money. It is important to spend public money properly, and I suggest that all the money being spent by various Government Departments—I thought that we had the Opposition's support for that—is being exceptionally well spent.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield tried the Home Secretary's patience earlier by continually saying that he would bring forward new policies but never saying what they would be. Here he goes again, saying that he wants to spend more. Does he wish to give a pledge now? My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary is here with his little calculator. He would love to add such a pledge to previous Labour pledges. The trouble is that the Labour party will not say what they intend to do or how much they intend to spend.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again.

Sir John Wheeler: I intervene as I reflect on what my right hon. Friend has just said. Does he agree that the £18 billion referred to in the Home Affairs Select Committee report is the estimated amount of money which moves through the international banking system, which happens to be based here in London? Does he agree that it is not money that is identifiable in the sense that we can send vanloads of police to seize it tomorrow but money that is believed to move through the system because London happens to be the premier banking location in the world?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. That is yet another example of how the hon. Member for Huddersfield simply misquoted the Home Affairs Select Committee report. The report is available in the Library of the House and the words are on the page.

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I reluctantly take issue with the Chairman of the Select Committee. He misleads the House—I am sure because he has a lapse of memory. The report says:

"The National Drugs Intelligence Co-ordinator estimated that there is at least £1,800 million"—

not billion—

"derived from drug trafficking in the United Kingdom."

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is an intervention, not a point of order.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) talked himself pretty satisfactorily on to the Standing Committee. He asked several detailed questions about Scottish provisions, the definition of a ship and whether British customs or other vessels in hot pursuit can board boats in international waters. I look forward to debating all those points in Standing Committee, but I should surely be out of order if I debated them in detail on Second Reading.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive, I must make some progress. I have given way more than all those who have spoken put together.

I shall end my speech by referring to the speeches made by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North was right when he urged us again and again that there must be no legalisation of any presently illegal drugs. We agree with him entirely. I congratulate him and his Committee on its excellent report, to which, as I said earlier, we shall reply as soon as possible.

I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton for his support for our tightening up of confiscation orders. I know that, with his wide experience at the criminal bar and sitting as a recorder, he recognises the need to tighten up the confiscation legislation. Perhaps we should have recognised it in earlier legislation. He also referred to the need for greater international co-operation.

I welcome the bipartisan approach of the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen and congratulate both the hon. Member for Huddersfield and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West on their excellent speeches. I look forward to the Committee stage. However, the point was made forcefully by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton that we are debating an issue which affects all our children—the fight against drugs.

Time after time, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary rose to press the hon. Member for

Huddersfield, who was making generalised statements, about future Labour policy, to give greater detail. Understandably, the hon. Gentleman could not give an answer. I do not criticise him for that, because the person who should have been here this afternoon to debate this extremely important issue is the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). There is nothing more vital for our children's future than prevention of drug abuse. Where was the self-styled shadow Home Secretary? He was not here this afternoon.

The only thought-provoking remark made by any Opposition Member about how a Labour party policy might develop in future was made by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who is no longer in his place. He has been described in my hearing as a thinking man's Roy Hattersley. He at least came up with a positive suggestion, which was grasped with both hands by the hon. Member for Huddersfield as the nearest thing to a proper Labour policy on drug abuse that he could find. He then compounded his failure by intervening—which I thought was impertinent—in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North to say that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook had more important things to do than attend the debate this afternoon, because he was deputy leader of the Labour party. The right hon. Gentleman was putting his political duties before his duties to the House.

Labour Members bellow brazenly with criticism, but they are shy of telling us their policies. I shall do my best during the Standing Committee proceedings, if the Bill receives a Second Reading, to tease out those policies. We shall return to Labour's policies——

Mr. Lawrence: And how much they cost.

Mr. Patten: As my hon. and learned Friend says, and how much they cost. Having said that, I thank the Labour Front Bench spokesmen for supporting the Bill and I sit down in the sure and certain knowledge that they will not force it to a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

CRIMINAL JUSTICE (INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION) BILL *[Lords] [Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under that Act.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

European Community (Fraud)

[Relevant document: un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on 4th December 1989 on anti-fraud policy: Commission work programme.]

6.38 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1988 and European Community Document No. 4582/90 relating to action against fraud; and approves the Government's efforts to press for value for money from Community expenditure.

The two reports referred to in the motion will be discussed at ECOFIN on 12 March. I hope that the debate will help to show the Commission, and our partners, that the Government have the full backing of the House as we spearhead efforts to get to grips with fraud. It may be helpful to remind the House of the backcloth to the two reports.

The Commission's report on action against fraud stems in no small part from a growing anxiety here in Britain. This House has shown a major interest in the subject, on which we have held valuable debates. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and my hon. Friends the Members for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) have shown a particular interest in the subject. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities published an excellent report on "Fraud Against the Community" in February 1989 and the Government's political determination to tackle fraud has never been in doubt. We have, with the full support of the House, striven to put fraud higher on the agendas of Brussels.

The British Government have ensured a higher profile for fraud in ECOFIN and other Councils of Ministers, and we will keep up our pressure to turn good intentions into concrete changes for safeguarding public money. The annual ECOFIN debate of the Court of Auditors report began in 1985, largely at United Kingdom instigation. The present initiative against fraud was launched by ECOFIN in March 1989, and followed discussion of a United Kingdom paper.

Our recommendations, accepted by the Commission, included revision of arrangements for monitoring and surveillance of common agricultural policy transactions involving the payment of export refunds to traders, adjustments to improve the monitoring of systems for storing agricultural products which have been taken into intervention, better scrutiny of the accounts of firms and traders which receive payments under CAP, simplification of Community legislation in relevant areas, and a review of the supervisory arrangements which member states were required to introduce in the regulations governing the expanded structural funds.

Those recommendations were reinforced at a meeting of the Commission's committee on fraud prevention, known as UCLAF, in May when another United Kingdom paper examined this work and suggested further work for the future. It emphasised the need for a long-term programme of action and laid particular stress on the need to improve systems for combating fraud. We advocated

[Mr. Richard Ryder]

regular and comprehensive examination of control systems consistent with firm financial management control.

At our instigation, fraud featured both at ECOFIN and at the European Council at Madrid in June. ECOFIN welcomed the Commission's programme of work on fraud, called for early action on export refunds and intervention storage and asked all member states to instruct their ministerial colleagues to intensify the fight against fraud. The European Council in Madrid emphasised the need for firm action, welcomed the work programme and instructed the Council of Ministers to decide quickly on proposals from the Commission to combat fraud.

Britain has always been in the vanguard in the fight against fraud. The discussions and decisions that I have outlined owed a great deal to our political will and to the importance that we and the entire House attach to it. Sadly, the available figures do not suggest that all other member states take the problem as seriously as Britain does. We reported 163 cases of CAP fraud to the Commission in the first three quarters of 1989, whereas Greece and Portugal reported none. Regrettably, reporting standards differ between member states which makes comparisons difficult.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend agree that the maddening aspect of this is that, because we track down fraud assiduously and come up with figures, other people think that we are worse than they are, which is most misleading and unfair when we have far less fraud and are much more careful about it?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend draws attention to an important point which she raised in the recent agriculture debate. We certainly believe that Britain is as assiduous as any other European Community country in identifying and reporting fraud.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the Minister satisfied that Community fisheries policy funds can no longer be siphoned off by unscrupulous fishing interests in certain European Community littoral states?

Mr. Ryder: Fraud is such a complex issue that one can never be certain about anything when it comes to some of the ways in which people in Europe can commit fraud. The British Government, the Commission and most of our partners in the European Community have done everything possible to get to grips with this issue, especially in the past year and principally as a result of the pressure that we brought to bear in Brussels and at other Council meetings in Europe—notably the Council to which I have already referred, which met last June in Madrid. I leave it to hon. Members to draw their own conclusions from the figures that I have given, which show that our reporting of fraud seems to be far more accurate than that of some other countries.

I wish to highlight four areas in which concrete progress has been made. First, a new export refund monitoring regulation toughens up existing arrangements by requiring customs officers in all member states to inspect in person a minimum proportion of items on which export refunds are claimed. The proportion will rise to 5 per cent. by 1992. This measure is a direct response to last year's Court of Auditors report which catalogued numerous examples of frauds relating to export refunds. In a sample of 95 export consignments examined by the court in one member state, only one had been subject to random examination; and that was fraudulent.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the Minister agree that that is shocking, and that if a private company was involved in that amount of fraud it would soon be up in court and prevented from continuing to trade?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: That is why we are dealing with this.

Mr. Ryder: As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) observes from a sedentary position, that is precisely why we are dealing with this matter. As I have said, the British Government have been in the vanguard and have spearheaded the efforts of the European Community to get to grips with the problem. I only wish that others in Europe took the issue as seriously as we do. A considerable amount of the progress in the past 12 months has been made as a result of the efforts undertaken by Ministers in many Council meetings in Brussels. We have also received the support and approval of the Commission.

Secondly, in its report last year the Court of Auditors said that existing documentation for export refund purposes did not provide sufficient proof that cargoes had arrived at their stated destination. The court cited the discovery in one case that two major export refund traders in different member states owned complete sets of customs stamps of the main countries with which they traded. This illustrated the danger of relying on the documentation in question—the so-called annex 2 documents—which bears no greater proof of arrival than a customs stamp. This document has now been abolished and replaced with a more secure sysstem. Incidentally, the United Kingdom is one of only two member states that have given the Commission wholehearted support in this matter.

Thirdly, a new code of conduct defines the basis on which member states are obliged to report all significant frauds and irregularities in respect of structural fund receipts. The code specifies the information to be provided by national authorities, including information on the state of legal proceedings, and the timetable for returns.

The last of my four points concerns tougher regulations relating to the payment of own resources. For example, regulation 1552/89 requires member states to report all funds and irregularities involving more than £7,000 of own resources and empowers the Commission to carry out on-the-spot inspections at traders' premises and customs offices in member states.

Attempts have also been made to simplify the tests applied to determine whether a payment is justified. This makes sense for everyone involved in a transaction—the person claiming the payment and the organisation, such as a Ministry of Agriculture, deciding whether the payment is justified. In some areas, notably agriculture, the requirements were becoming difficult to apply, as well as being increasingly difficult to audit. A good example of what has been achieved is the scheme for export refunds of beef and veal where the number of product classifications has been reduced by more than a third and the number of frozen meat refund rates has been cut by half. That will

reduce the scope for fraud based on bogus declarations of the quality of exported meat and its destination. While recognising that sensible simplification of complex rules should be supported, we shall not fall into the trap of agreeing rules which diminish our chances of preventing fraud.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend agree that we would stand a much better chance if people from other countries inspected each other's things? An inter-EEC inspectorate, in which we do not have to adjudicate on our goods and the Dutch do not have to adjudicate on theirs, would be better because people are by nature more reluctant to identify fraud in their own country because it redounds badly on their country. Does my hon. Friend not agree that interchangeable inspectorates would be much more likely to sus out what was going on, so long as they all worked alongside one another?

Mr. Ryder: We have been making broad progress in that direction. When this subject was debated in the House a year ago, only 10 people were employed in the Serious Fraud Office in Brussels—now the number is 30. The office also has considerable powers along the lines that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster would like. As time goes on we shall move further in the direction in which she wants the House and the Community to go.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark: (Birmingham, Selly Oak): In countries such as Britain, which has a national Parliament, if someone engages in fraud he or she is taken to court and faces severe penalities. That is right—otherwise, fraud would prosper. What penalties have been imposed on people who have engaged in fraud abroad? Is it not true that all that happens is that one loses the payment for which one fraudulently claims? If that is the only penalty, would it not be worth having a try?

Mr. Ryder: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend would ever do that. I shall refer directly to my hon. Friend's point about prosecutions later in my remarks.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow) *rose*—

Mr. Ryder: I must make progress. I have given way several times already, but shall give way for the last time to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Gill: Before my hon. Friend moves on to another subject will he consider that with beef—a product that he mentioned—the inspectorate will find it difficult to discern whether fraud has taken place. The way in which the commodity is handled, stored and generally presented defies expert identification. Even people who have spent a lifetime in the industry would be hard put to tell whether the commodity that is labelled as being in the box is actually contained in it, and whether it is a certain cut of beef or not. The only way in which my hon. Friend will ever solve the problem of fraud in that sphere is to do away with the whole system. No amount of inspectors and extra cash thrown at the problem will eliminate it because it defies even the experts.

Mr. Ryder: I know that my hon. Friend speaks with a deep knowledge of the subject. I believe that he has been in the industry all his life.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): It has made him a vegetarian.

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend whispers from a sedentary position that it has made my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) become a vegetarian.

I was beginning to have some sympathy with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member of Ludlow until to his conclusion. If he believes that there are ways in which the system can be improved in line with what we have been doing during the past 12 months, I shall be happy not only to receive his advice but to consider it before the ECOFIN meeting in mid-March, which will be attended by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

Before we can assess the effectiveness of measures against fraud we need better information about the scale, nature and incidence of fraud, especially from some of our partners. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is widespread recognition of the problem of fraud in Europe. The Commission's report on fraud includes two significant examples. The first is a list of 132 irregularities in agriculture, totalling about £39 million. I do not for one moment believe that that represents more than the tip of the iceberg. The second example involves a legally significant Greek fraud, where maize imported from Yugoslavia was re-exported under a Greek label and payment of the agricultural levy thereby evaded. The respective powers of the member states and of the Commission are being examined as a result of the ruling by the European Court of Justice on the case which followed the exposure of that fraud.

The Commisssion regard the European Court of Justice's judgment as reaffirming the power of the Commission to impose administrative sanctions to ensure compliance with Community law and the obligation on member states to take effective action to penalise fraud affecting the Community budget in the same way as fraud affecting their national budgets. We believe that the Commission's position on administrative sanctions is right and we are disappointed that some other countries do not share that view.

We support the imposition of administrative penalties, provided that the penalties are automatic and in proportion to the scale of error involved and that the arrangements do not involve any form of judicial process. An attempt to distinguish between genuine mistakes and deliberate attempts to defraud should not be undertaken by the Commission as that would be an unacceptable intrusion into role of the judiciary. The Commission may publish a regulation setting out its view. That is unnecessary, but we will support it if it is the only way to improve financial discipline.

We agree with the general direction of the Commission's programme of work on fraud for 1990, but we want to see a clear timetable, with dates for completion of the work. We want concrete evidence of improvements in the reporting of fraud and in the controls carried out by member states and resolution of the question of administrative penalties in agriculture. We also want early introduction of a binding code of conduct for the structural funds.

With regard to legislation, we shall maintain pressure on the Council to react to Commission proposals quickly. Indeed, the European Council underlined the need for swift action last year in Madrid.

I have set out the background to and some of the main themes of the Commission's report, "The Fight Against

[Mr. Ryder]

Fraud". Thanks in no small part to our efforts, progress was made in 1989, but British pressure will be maintained at all levels and within every Department.

With regard to the Court of Auditors report, I appreciate the court's thoroughness and professionalism in preparing the report, which highlights ways in which policies can be improved and control systems tightened up. The court comments on the clearance of accounts—the procedure whereby the Commission checks the reliability of member states' annual declarations of expenditure on agricultural support. It also decides the amounts charged against the budget. The Commission disallows expenditure when payments have not been made in accordance with the scheme's rules. Expenditure which is not recognised is disallowed. It then has to be repaid to the Community.

The principle of disallowance is central to the control of Community funds. The Commission has drawn the attention of member states to the fact that proper checks are not being carried out on Community expenditure. France faced disallowances—in effect a penalty of £80 million—for inadequate control over payments of livestock premiums in 1986 and 1987. The United Kingdom was penalised by £5·3 million in 1987 for late collection of clawback debts and poor controls over the reliability of traders' export declarations.

The Court of Auditors criticises the slow introduction of proper audit systems and recommends that the Commission look at the resources required to carry out this task effectively, and we agree. On the structural funds, the Court of Auditors raises questions about additionality and transport infrastructure. The United Kingdom strongly supports the court's work, but in neither of those areas do we agree with what is said about the United Kingdom.

On additionality, the court alleges that expenditure is not being devoted to the projects intended and that expenditure from the Community budget should not simply replace national expenditure. We rebut those allegations. Every ecu that we get from the funds goes to the programme or project for which it is intended. Public spending plans are set after taking account of likely levels of receipts from the Community budget. Those receipts enable public spending in the United Kingdom to fund more projects than would otherwise have been the case.

The court also names the United Kingdom as one of the member states in which transport infrastructure moneys have merely subsidised projects which would have——

It being Seven o'clock, and there being Private Business set down by direction of THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking Private Business), further proceeding stood postponed.*

Redbridge London Borough Council Bill

(By Order)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment proposed [1 February] on consideration of the Bill, as amended.

Clause 3

ESTABLISHMENT OF MARKET

Which amendment was: in page 2, leave out lines 17 and 18 and insert:

'(2) A market established under this section may be held on such days of the week as the Council may determine, including Sunday.'.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that we are also discussing the following amendments: No. 3, in page 2, line 18, at end insert

'save that the market shall not be held on more than two days a week'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 18, at end insert

'save that the market shall not be held on more than one day a week'.

7 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is nice to see you in the Chair again, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I am thinking back to the time when we last debated this matter a couple of weeks ago—although I am not sure that you would extend the same welcome to me. Hon. Members who were present when the debate was interrupted then will not need me to remind them where we had reached in relation to this group of amendments. In fairness to hon. Members who were not present, I will give a brief resumé of what we are discussing, or new arrivals may find the issues complex.

The essential aspect of the amendments is the number of days on which the proposed Ilford market may open. In that context, several options are before the House, including the option to open on Sunday and various restrictions on the number of days per week, to which I shall refer in detail.

The wider issue at the heart of the Bill is whether it is fair and proper for the private Bill procedure to be used to cancel rights enjoyed by royal writ for over 700 years, when successive Governments have chosen not to do so. We have discussed that matter and it would not be in order for me to talk about it at length now. It is important for hon. Members coming new to the discussion to be aware of what is involved and, in particular, to remember that 284 hon. Members have in their constituencies equivalent charter markets, each of which could be affected by Bills such as this. That is why the National Market Traders Federation remains strongly opposed to it.

Since I last addressed the House on this subject my council has written to me again making some points that it believes were not properly made last time. They are germane to the question of how many days the market should open because that, in turn, goes to the heart of the profitability of the proposed Ilford market and, from my point of view, that of the existing Romford market.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, is unable, as on previous occasions,

to contribute to our proceedings. He must sit in frustration listening to my second-hand attempts to put across the case that he would make.

The first point that was made to me—this is relevant to how often the market trades—is the need to clarify once and for all the number of traders involved in Romford. The number of traders occupying pitches in a full market would be nearer 300 than 600. The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who is on the Opposition Front Bench, will recall that we discussed that point at length two weeks ago. Havering council, which covers Romford, makes the point that many of the existing stalls cover two or even three spaces, and that is why the figure is nearer 300 than 600, with a percentage set aside for casual traders.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is no queue for stalls at Romford market? Traders are not queueing up to take part in the market, so one must ask whether there is any need for additional resources in the area.

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point which the promoters of the Bill will wish to take on board. I accept that 5 per cent. of the spaces are reserved for casual traders, who turn up when they wish to and who are not regular traders.

There was much discussion about the distance of six and two thirds miles and it was suggested, rightly, that that was an arcane form of measurement. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) asked why the Food Act 1984 did not provide the same protection. That measure left intact the rules that a franchise market is protected against any rival within six and two thirds miles. A statutory market is also protected, within six and two thirds miles, from any rival other than a statutory market.

Those are all relevant points when considering how many days the market should be open because the distance within which markets may operate one from another goes to the heart of the profitability of those markets. For all the argument about anachronisms, if the Bill is enacted, the London borough of Redbridge will enjoy protection under the same rules against rival markets established within that borough, and that protection will undoubtedly be relevant to the financial arrangements for the market at Ilford.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): My hon. Friend might ask those representing Redbridge to say exactly what is the span of the Redbridge area. I suspect that we shall find that its protection extends over a substantial area in terms of square mileage.

Mr. Squire: I suspect that that question is directed to someone else, through me, so it would be wise if I continued speaking rather than locked to an hon. Friend to answer. But I know that my hon. Friends from Redbridge will confirm that parts of Redbridge would be more than the relevant six and two thirds miles from Romford market and, presumably, would be outside the scope of the Bill.

My good and hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) said when we previously debated this matter that the compensation was extremely generous. The central difficulty for the London borough of Havering is how to establish a proper compensation basis, which is part of the issue of taking away long-held rights. How does one measure such matters?

It has always been open to the London borough of Redbridge to ask the London borough of Havering, "Would you grant us not permanent rights but scheduled rights under your powers, so that we may trade and set up all the necessary conditions?" The only time that that was even suggested in the context of the Bill was in the statement, which hon. Members will recognise, "This will happen anyway and, because of that, we would like to discuss it". That is scarcely what might be termed open-ended discussions. Discussions have been promised only in the context of a Bill which would, in the council's eyes, be passed.

It should be remembered, especially in view of the weather now, that we are talking only about the open market, not about the covered market in Romford, which is privately owned and run and is similar, I am told, to the covered market in Ilford. We are talking about a clearly defined open market area.

I stressed that I did not want to talk at length or to quote from letters, and I hope that I have managed not to do so. However, the key point in this group of amendments is whether market trading should be extended to Sundays. When our proceedings were interrupted on the previous occasion, an interesting discussion was getting under way on hon. Members' attitudes to Sunday opening.

A few years ago hon. Members were required to come to a conclusion on Sunday trading and it is not my role tonight to persuade them, one way or the other, to change their conclusion. However, since then there has been a surge of people wanting local authorities to take action and in some cases of councils, including my own, taking action to close places on Sunday and attracting a lot of public condemnation as a result. The matter is unsatisfactory and most of us, whatever our views about Sunday trading, would welcome clarification of the rules.

I would go a little further. I suspect that Sunday trading is the baby of the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who has many things on his plate at the moment, including working out what we should be watching on our televisions and listening to on our radios. Because of his current workload and what happened when the Government last tried to introduce legislation on Sunday trading, I can understand why he may be reluctant to introduce legislation that would raise the issue again.

But we have an opportunity tonight to show the Government whether we are interested in the reintroduction of such legislation. It would be welcome if 300 or 400 hon. Members were to vote on this group of amendments. It would be even more welcome if they voted overwhelmingly in favour of the line that I took at the time, which was to extend Sunday trading. We should then be showing the Government clearly that a substantial body of hon. Members had seen the inevitable consequences of rejecting legislation a few years ago—that local authorities would be required to prosecute the law with full vigour—and recognised that that was essentially unsatisfactory. This is an unstable position which creates much annoyance among many of my constituents.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Would it be possible for hon. Members to be in favour of the

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

extension of Sunday trading but opposed to the Sunday trading extension being applied to the market? Much depends on what is happening in Redbridge and the shopkeeping provisions near the market. I do not know whether we know what is likely to be sold in the market or in the areas round the market, and whether the sales within the market would assist sales in the shops or whether they would be in competition with them and cause problems within Redbridge.

7.15 pm

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman makes several valid points. He must be right to suggest that one could take a different view on Sunday trading at the market and generally or one could be against both or in favour of both. All that we know about what is to be sold, based on the evidence taken in Committee, to which I shall refer later—I do not want to stretch your tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by referring to it now—is that a number of things would be prohibited or permitted. But nothing in the Bill, as yet would cover that point. This group of amendments would give the House a valuable opportunity to tackle what most people see as an anomaly that will not go away except as a result of future legislation.

This is a narrow Bill on which to vote on Sunday trading, but it would be one of many straws in the wind. Many issues have started in small measures and have subsequently been seen to be major issues in their own right.

The critical point of holding the market on one or two day a week goes to the heart of the Bill. We are discussing a precedent. I am grateful for a short note that I received only this week from Mr. Toller, the general secretary of the National Market Traders Federation. The key paragraph in his letter says:

> "A point that has not yet been raised is that if this Bill were passed it would form a precedent for anyone, not just a local authority, to sponsor a Private Bill to set up a market"—

on any number of days per week.

> "I know from experience that both British Rail and London Underground are interested in setting up markets at weekends on station car parks as a way of raising additional revenue, and British Coal, British Steel and British Ports all have spare land that could be used."

I am not trying to make blood-curdling suggestions to hon. Members with markets in their constituencies, but the general drift of the general secretary's fears is clear, and he is a man with experience and knowledge of markets. The only precedent for this Bill is the so called "Bexley Bill" which disappeared suddenly because agreement seems to have been reached. But precedents, once established, are easily quoted. Hon. Members will find that the fears expressed by Mr. Toller could be realised in their constituencies. They could find similar private Bills, not national legislation that can be voted against on principle, and their worst fears could be realised which would have an impact on many of their constituents and market traders.

Mr. Harry Barnes: From what the hon. Gentleman is saying, we appear to be in a difficulty. Should we judge the best interests of Redbridge and treat this as a separate Bill, or should we consider the consequences that are likely to flow from it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We must confine ourselves to Redbridge, for good or bad.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) suggested that the Bill had a knock-on effect which, without going into it in detail, would influence the attitudes of hon. Members to the measure. That would presumably add weight to his point that this is not an ideal way in which to deal with legislation.

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman makes the point succinctly and with admirable accuracy. It would be stretching the well-known tolerance of hon. Members to expect them to identify with the specific issue of Romford market or Ilford market, for reasons that need no expansion. I take that point. But my one hope is that I can get across to sufficient hon. Members that we are talking about the way in which the matter has been dealt with, establishing a precedent which can and arguably will be followed by other markets in other parts of the country where councils will seek to set up markets in competition with markets that have been established by royal decree for some 700 years and without any wholesale revision of the law.

I am a reasonable person; I do not think it is yet a crime to plead guilty to that. If we were considering wholesale revision of the law on markets, there would be an opportunity for some to say, "I want the law to remain as it is," and for others to say, "We want a complete free-for-all". But we are not having that. It is unfortunate that the Bill has been presented.

The key point is the number of days per week on which the market may be held. Again, that goes to the heart of the profitability of the market. In previous debates on the measure, we heard that Romford market is open three days a week. As drafted, the Bill proposes six days a week for Redbridge, twice as many as for Romford. That increases the concern of those involved with the existing market. They have no other way of defending their livelihood. How else can they do so except by saying that this is not a reasonable and proper way to proceed?

I have given the reason for the proposed amendments. They are worthy of consideration. In particular, amendment No. 3, which proposes that the market should not be held on more than two days a week, deserves support.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I am participating in the debate because an important point of principle is at stake. I have no particular interest in the markets being discussed by my hon. Friends. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on the way in which he moved the amendment in my absence some days ago.

We are debating the principle of Sunday trading because the precedent that could be set by the Bill—if the House is minded to accept my amendment—could apply to other statutory markets. As we have heard, there are 284 in all. Two are in my constituency, and both would benefit greatly from the introduction of the Sunday trading facility.

We are not trying, through the amendment, to compel any market to trade on Sunday, nor to compel any council or local authority to insist that it does. We are merely saying that the local authority should at least have the enabling power to determine the days upon which a market should trade. If the local authority wishes to

include Sunday, so be it. That is the wish of Parliament, but it will also be the wish of the democratically elected local authority.

We have heard a great deal recently about accountability in local government. No doubt with the introduction of the community charge such accountability will grow. Many of us very much hope that it will. If a local authority decides, therefore, that rather than being compelled to enforce the law on Sunday trading—in other words, to take Sunday traders to court for having broken the law of the land—it should enable those traders to trade on a Sunday, that would be to the benefit of everyone.

Mr. O'Brien: I wish to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the evidence given in Committee. The local authority—on this occasion, Redbridge—stated categorically that it would not wish to operate the market on a Sunday. That was a decision taken by the council. Why is the hon. Gentleman saying that we should go against the wishes of the local authority?

Mr. Colvin: I am not saying that. If the hon. Gentleman has listened, he would have heard that I said by passing the amendment we would enable the local authority in future, should it so decide, to allow a market to trade on Sunday. The composition of the local authority will no doubt change as elections take place. The elected councillors who made the decision, and who presumably gave evidence in Committee, may change. When they change, the new council may take a completely different view. What we are talking about is in a sense an enabling measure.

It may be of interest to the House to consider the attitude of the trade unions. Perhaps there is an hon. Member present who can enlighten us as to how many of those who man trading markets are members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, which has been resolute in its opposition to Sunday trading. In the case of trading markets, I do not think that there are many members of that trade union involved, so I cannot see that those who are in the business of manning stalls in statutory trading markets should necessarily be opposed to trading on Sunday.

I also believe that the National Market Traders Federation would like its members to be entitled to trade on Sunday, if they wish, and they do not want local authorities to take them to court for breaking the law. I remind the House that the last time a survey was done on the attitude of the public towards Sunday trading, 72 per cent. were in favour of reform. That is overwhelming support.

Because the principle of Sunday trading is crucial to the amendment, it is as well to remind the House of the basis upon which the committee of inquiry under Mr. Robin Auld, QC, was established in August 1983 to examine proposals for amending the Shops Act 1950, which is the basis upon which traders are taken to court by local authorities if they are seen to be trading on a Sunday. The terms of reference of the committee of inquiry were:

"To consider what changes are needed in the Shops Act, having regard to the interests of consumers, employers and employees, and to the traditional character of Sunday, and to make recommendations on how these could be achieved."

As you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in its report the committee came down overwhelmingly in favour of Sunday trading. It was therefore regrettable that Parliament, when asked to consider the matter on a later occasion——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that this is the appropriate moment for a general debate on Sunday trading. Parliament has already dealt with that. It is beyond the terms of the amendment before the House.

Mr. Colvin: I accede to your request, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to bring the debate more into line with Redbridge and the market which we are considering in today's debate.

When the House last voted on this issue, it voted against a change in the existing law, but it was a very close run thing. The debate was on 14 April 1986 and the vote, which was a free vote, was lost by only 14. The pity about the Second Reading debate is that the House never had the opportunity to discuss any compromise on Sunday trading. Had it done so, perhaps we could have finished up with an Act on the statute book which would have taken account of the special needs of statutory markets.

Mr. Squire: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the many compromises which might have been open to the House was directly relevant——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just reminded the House that Parliament has already decided the general policy on Sunday trading. We cannot use this modest amendment as a vehicle to reopen the debate and have an inquest on what alternatives Parliament might or might not have considered agreeable. We have to get back to Redbridge.

Mr. Colvin: I conclude by saying that the debate on Sunday trading will continue both in the House and outside. The House has an exceptional opportunity with the Bill before us to send a signal to the Government that it feels that with the passage of time the opinion of the House has changed and is more in line with the opinions of those whom we represent. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) made a brave attempt last year to bring forward a private Member's Bill to amend the law on Sunday trading and the amendment in my name is aimed at sending another signal to Government that it is high time that the House was given the opportunity——

Mr. Harry Barnes: I wonder what the hon. Member's attitude is towards the other amendments. That could influence our attitude to his point about Redbridge and Sunday trading. He is making a speech about Sunday trading generally, whereas we are discussing the situation in Redbridge. There is some inconsistency in the conjunction of the amendments as the amendment to which he is speaking would theoretically allow markets to be open for seven days while other amendments would reduce it to one or two days.

Mr. Colvin: The only amendment on which I wish to speak is the one tabled in my name. If the House makes a decision on the remaining amendments it will be up to the House to set my amendment aside. We do not wish to lay down the law emphatically on the way local authorities conduct their affairs with regard to statutory markets. We should enable authorities to take such decisions as they see fit in the light of the feelings of their electors, and that is precisely what my amendment seeks to do.

7.30 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) mentioned the threat to Romford market from what is happening in Ilford. Recently, the borough of Havering has heard from Romford and Dagenham. They want information on this issue. That leads us to suspect that they will seek to follow the example set by Redbridge and will also seek to infringe the rights held by Romford market. When they do that——

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): What sort of information did they seek?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I had a letter from the chief executive of my borough—Havering—telling me that the borough of Barking had been in touch with him to seek information and specific details about our market rights, which leads him to suspect that they propose to follow the route taken by the borough of Redbridge.

If the House decides to give passage to the Bill, I find it hard to see how it can differentiate in the case of Barking and all the other boroughs throughout the country which will seek to follow Redbridge's example. We are not talking only about what is happening in Romford and Redbridge.

Sunday trading is an important issue from the point of view of people in my borough, and we must not skirt over it, notwithstanding the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) which seemed to cover a wider scope than the amendment that we are now discussing.

The effect of the Shops Act 1950, and the way in which Sunday trading may or may not apply to what is proposed for the new market in Ilford, is of great importance to us. We must deal with it fully.

We are talking about rights in Romford which go back some 800 years, and are deeply steeped in history. It is worth making the point that that is also true of Sunday trading restrictions. Hon. Members will undoubtedly recall that Sunday trading restrictions date back to the Sunday Fairs Act 1448 and were strengthened by the Sunday Observance Act 1677 and have been in the law ever since.

Whatever the merits, or rights and wrongs, of Sunday trading, this is certainly not the appropriate Bill—as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said—for Sunday trading to be introduced in legislation. The reason that I say that is, first, that we have to consider the fifth schedule of the 1950 Act—

"Transactions for the purposes of which a shop may be open in England and Wales for the serving of customers on Sunday".

In this case, there was no reason why the market stall should not be put in the same position as the shop. The list is fairly comprehensive, and I shall take out those items that may have relevance, or would have relevance to market stalls that I suspect that my hon. Friend's council is likely to put in Redbridge market. Were it to do so, the following stalls would fit in the definition of the fifth schedule of the 1950 Act: those which serve

"meals or refreshments, whether or not for consumption at the shop at which they are sold, but not including the sale of fried fish and chips at a fried fish and chip shop; . . . newly cooked provisions and cooked or partly cooked tripe; . . . table waters, sweets, chocolates, sugar confectionery and ice-cream, (including wafers and edible containers); . . . flowers, fruit and vegetables (including mushrooms) other than tinned or bottled fruit or vegetables; . . . milk and cream, not including tinned or dried milk or cream, but including clotted cream whether sold in tins or otherwise; . . . aircraft, motor, or cycle supplies or accessories".

I noted that when this issue was discussed in Committee—I was not a member of the Committee—Redbridge council said that it would specifically not include aircraft, motor or cycle supplies or accessories. As I was not present, and as I am afraid that I have not had the chance to read all the details of what went on in Committee, perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) could enlighten me at some stage as to why that was mentioned in Committee. It seems to me that it might have had something to do with Redbridge council attempting to distance its proposals from the terms of the 1950 Act.

The list continues:

"newspapers, periodicals and magazines; . . . guide books, postcards, photographs, reproductions, photographic films and plates, and souvenirs . . . requisites for any game or sport at any premises or place where that game or sport is played or carried on"—

perhaps this is not relevant to Redbridge market but it is deeply steeped in the history of the whole affair—

"fodder for horses, mules, ponies and donkeys at any farm, stables, hotel or inn."

My reason for reading that list out is that a huge number of the items I have mentioned will undoubtedly be sold in the market in Ilford. I am not clear whether the terms of the Shops Act 1950 will allow stalls to open on Sunday or not, and I should like some enlightenment from my hon. Friend when he tells us the reactions of his borough to the proposals in the amendments.

The second category in the 1950 Act for which trading on Sunday is allowed is in section 48, which says that the local authority is empowered to make partial exemption orders permitting shops to be open for part of Sunday for the sale of bread and flour, confectionery, fish and groceries. I also suggest that many of those items will be on sale in the market, and I wonder whether the Shops Act 1950 applies to it. If it does, will the council allow the market to open on Sunday, notwithstanding whatever may be said by the House about the amendment?

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Member is pursuing the line that it seems that there will be a considerable overlap between what will be for sale in the market and what could be available in the shops in the area. The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said that people in markets are often not organised in USDAW, which is the union that operates in shops, yet USDAW members will be prominent in the shops, so their interests begin to be directly related to what happens in the market because it may cause their shops to be opened on Sunday.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly correct. However, I am trying to explain that I am not clear whether my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South, who is sponsoring the measure, needs the amendment or whether the market could happen willy-nilly. Before we can make a decision on voting on the amendment in the Lobbies, that point must be made clear.

The third category dealt with by the 1950 Act, in section 53, concerns people who observe the Jewish sabbath. At present, as I understand it, they may open shops on Sunday until 2 pm, but must close the shops on Saturdays instead. I am not clear whether this will apply to the proposals for Redbridge. If they may do that under the

1950 Act, and if my hon. Friend's proposal is that Redbridge market should be open on Saturday, would members of the Jewish faith who have stalls in the market be able to make an application that they should be allowed to trade on Sunday instead of Saturday? According to my reading of the 1950 Act, there is no reason why that should not be so, but it would ride a coach and horses through the legislation with which we think, at least, that we are dealing this evening.

Section 54 of the Shops Act make special provision for Sunday opening in respect of street markets and shops that have customarily been held, or open, on Sundays in some parts of London. On the face of it, that is an extremely potent argument in favour of the amendment: if many other London markets are already empowered specifically to open on Sundays, Redbridge—as part of the Greater London area—should be able to do the same. As far as I know, however, Romford is not among the markets that have opened on Sundays, and I therefore do not think that it would be appropriate to allow Ilford to creep in under section 54 of the Act to obtain a power that would be denied to Romford because it has traded for so long without trading on Sundays.

The administration and enforcement of the Shops Act is the responsibility of local authorities—that is, the common council of the City and the London borough councils. Each authority has a duty to appoint inspectors to enforce the Act. Debates in the House and comments in the press have often suggested that the extent to which those powers are enforced varies a good deal between authorities, and that is of course true.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch has already said that he is worried about the number of letters that he has received complaining that the London borough of Havering is enforcing the regulations on Sunday trading to an excessive degree. I too have received some angry letters about the way in which the local council is pursuing some of the shops in Havering to ensure that they abide by the law. I do not make that complaint myself, because I believe that laws that have been enforced by the House should be enforced until such time as we see fit to change them. As I said at the time of the proposal to change the law, I feel that Sunday trading should be allowed, but the matter has already been the subject of debates in the House—as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have pointed out.

We are confronted not merely by an opportunity but by a threat—that the law on Sunday trading will be undermined and reversed by what we decide this evening. It is important for us first to realise why a change in the law may be, overall, a good idea, and secondly to differentiate between that and the legislation that we are discussing tonight.

The essence of the proposal to allow Sunday trading in Redbridge market—and, perhaps, of the wider argument—is that this country's whole way of life has changed. The religious basis of the refusal to allow Sunday trading—which was addressed in the 1677 Act, and which has formed the foundation of our law for some 300 years—is much weaker now. Churchgoing habits have altered rapidly: I have no doubt that that applies to Redbridge, and I fear that it is also true in Romford. It is nonsense to suggest that the vast majority of people now think that Sunday trading would be against the religious principles on which our society is rightly based.

Another argument for allowing Sunday trading is the importance of people's quality for life. Sunday is the day when families can get together and, among other things, go shopping. According to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside and others, that is a good reason for undermining the present law, and introducing a chink into the armour that has so far resisted all the efforts of private Bills to allow Sunday trading.

Although there is some strength in that argument, I do not feel that it is strong enough, for two main reasons. First, it would give Redbridge an unfair advantage over my borough, which would certainly not be able to trade on Sundays under the law as it stands. Secondly, I suspect that a more general proposal for wider legislation would also not meet with success because of our strong inbuilt resistance to change in the current Sunday trading laws.

7.45 pm

Let me remind the House of some of the failures of the not-too-distant past. There was an attempt to introduce Sunday trading in the Shops Bill 1956-57, and more attempts in 1967-68. In that year the Shops (Sunday Trading) (No. 2) Bill was presented by Lord Derwent in the other place, and he made another attempt in 1970-71 in the Shops (Sunday Trading) Bill. The Shops (Weekday Trading) Bill was presented in 1970-71 by Mr. Evelyn King, later Lord King.

Sunday trading legislation was tried again in the Shops (Holiday Resorts—Sunday Trading) Bill presented by Baroness Phillips, and yet again in a ten-minute Bill by Clement Freud in 1976—the Shops (Sunday Trading) Bill. Further attempts were made by Sir John Langford-Holt in 1976 and 1977. My hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) presented a ten-minute Bill in 1978. It is not directly relevant to what we are discussing now, but I am sure that he would take the same view as I do. Nevertheless, there is a broader view that a change in the law is desirable; I do not wish to waste the time of the House, but I could give at least eight more examples of attempts to change it in the past few years.

I believe that, on that wider base, the initiative should be allowed to succeed, but in this instance such a move would be divisive and also unfair to shopkeepers, whose trade would be threatened by Sunday trading on the part of stallholders.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Gentleman's list shows the extent to which the general principle of Sunday trading has been debated, but is entirely inappropriate—almost in a procedural sense—to discussion of this measure. We are debating something much more specific, and it would be quite wrong to push through a measure that might have knock-on consequences when the House is half asleep.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I take the hon. Gentleman's point; indeed, it is in line with my feelings about the amendment, although I would feel differently if we were dealing with the broader issue. I feel that the proposal would be extremely unfair on Romford council, and on everyone trying to trade within the vicinity of the proposed shopping area.

Mr. O'Brien: There are other possibilities of unfairness. When we last debated the Bill, we were told that Redbridge council would not necessarily run the market, and that its operation might be taken over by a third party—a private individual. Is there not a danger that such an individual

[Mr. O'Brien]

would seize the opportunity to exercise more unfairness in relation to the local shopping community and the neighbouring markets?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. This is not the appropriate moment to pursue legislation that would gradually create wider powers for Sunday trading. I support the ultimate objective, but I do not support the steps that would be taken to get there if we were to use a creeping method, which would be one effect of passing the Bill. When we go into the Division Lobbies, I suspect that the hon. Gentleman and I will find ourselves in the usual position of being on the same side of this matter.

As for the other amendments in this group, there is a proposal that the market should be allowed to be held on only one day a week. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch made that proposal. As I am of a much more generous disposition and spirit, I have proposed that the market should be allowed to be held on two days a week —if Redbridge is to be allowed to have it at all, to which I have objected throughout.

It must be wrong that the Redbridge market should be open for the whole week. That is asking a great deal of hon. Members. I referred to that point on Second Reading, and I have heard nothing in the meantime to make me change my opinion. On that occasion, I referred to the fact that not many hon. Members were present, and few hon. Members are here now. Therefore, the point bears repeating so that it reaches a slightly wider audience.

My hon. Friends the Members for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) and for Ilford, South propose that there should be 80 stalls a day, on six days a week. That would provide Redbridge with an enormous number of stallholders. I do not recall having heard or read anything about the number of stallholders who would have a stall for six days a week, or about how many different stallholders would have a stall for one day a week. We should probably find that as many stallholders were occupying their stalls as those who are occupying the Romford stalls on a day-stall basis. That proposal would pose a great threat to the Romford market.

Times have changed. People have no difficulty in getting to a market. The legislation was drafted on the basis that it was extremely difficult in the old days to travel by horse or by foot to market. Most people travelled by foot to market because only the comparatively rich could travel to market by horse. The reason for the six-and-two-thirds-mile-limit was precisely the need to protect traders within an area where one could easily travel to market.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Within one day.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Yes, within one day, as my right hon. Friend reminds me.

It is now possible to travel many miles within a day. Our wives get into the car and travel long distances to a sale where they wish to buy something, or to a shop that stocks an article that they want to buy. The need, therefore, for two markets in the area has not been established.

As for the point that is raised by the amendment, would it be right for one of the markets to be open six days a week so that housewives in exactly the same catchment area of the two markets would be able to go to one of the markets six days a week?

Mr. Harry Barnes: One also has to consider the traders. As the hon. Gentleman said, people no longer walk to market, but saturation point must be reached when it comes to those who want to be involved in trading.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. If the market were open for six days a week, it would pose a substantial threat to the Romford market and to all those who are trading in the area.

The Romford market is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. On Mondays and Tuesdays, many of the people who normally come to Romford to do their shopping in the market do not go shopping in order to preserve Romford market's trading position on Wednesday. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South wants the market to be open in direct competition with mine, on the days on which mine is open. He also wants it to be open on the first two days of the week, when mine is not open. The House ought not to grant powers of that kind. It would contravene statutory rights and historic common law rights that have been preserved for centuries.

I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would explain why he thinks that it is necessary for Redbridge to have that six-day right, whereas we have been content for a very long time with the three days that we enjoy at the moment. I should also like him to explain what the consequences will be for Romford. There is certainly not room for both of us, according to the timing proposed by my hon. Friend.

If such a power is granted, we shall disregard what the powers that have run this country for a thousand years have said is right. Furthermore, we shall disregard what has always been protected by statute and what the House has always laid down in the past. Against the will of the council that is the recipient of these ancient rights, direct competition would be allowed within its restricted area of six-and two thirds miles.

I am sad that there are so many empty Benches. As my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside said earlier, this does not affect just Redbridge and Romford: it affects the whole community. There are 284 markets. Will the precedent that we are proposing to set, if the Bill is given a Second Reading and duly passes its Third Reading on another day, be disregarded? Shall we be the only market that is affected by the Bill?

I suggest that that will not happen. The Bill will be used as a precedent. There will be an unstoppable flood of hon. Members coming to the House and taking up a vast amount of parliamentary time on similar Bills. It would be neither right nor proper to have to deal with 284 applications such as this one during the next heaven knows how many years, nor would it be right for this House to be asked to change the general law and to abolish market rights that we have enjoyed for so long.

Mr. Barnes: In the 17th century, the tradition was to introduce Bills of this type. In later times, general legislation was introduced; the law was consolidated. For example, local enclosure measures were followed by a general Enclosure Act. After several Bills relating to markets had been passed, it might be thought that the law ought to be consolidated and there would be general legislation.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: That is a very good point. It is not right that changes of great magnitude should be made in this way. Redbridge has introduced this measure because of its parochial and self-centred desire to get itself a market, in contravention of all history and tradition. That is not the right way to go about it. If a change is to be made which will have national consequences, we ought to introduce legislation to cover all markets. Then it would be not only my hon. Friends the Members for Hornchurch and for Romsey and Waterside and I who would be deeply concerned about the results of the legislation: all my hon. Friends who have markets in their constituencies would come here to support us. I believe that such a proposal, with the assistance of many Opposition Members, would be defeated.

Mr. Barnes: My reason for taking part in the debate is that Chesterfield market is almost exactly six and two thirds miles from Dronfield, my own town, which is in the neighbouring constituency.

8 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: It is a great relief that the hon. Gentleman is supporting me. As a consequence of what happens tonight, Dronfield might decide to set up a market, although I am sure that the people of Dronfield would be much too sensible to do that, because in that part of the country, as in my own, there is demonstrably not room for two such markets, let alone three, in such a confined space.

I remind the House of what I said about Barking and Dagenham. If they wish to set up a market, we will come back here and go through precisely the same procedure all over again. On that occasion, Romford would have about the same chance of winning a vote as we do tonight, because it is piecemeal legislation, involving one local borough against another, and I am afraid it has not commanded as much attention as it should.

I am rather disappointed that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot take a robust view. That is most undesirable, and certainly not in line with the Government's wish to preserve markets in such a way that they can remain profitable and effective. I know that it is not the wish of a Conservative Government to change without good reason rights which have been enjoyed for 1,000 years.

I hope that I have made the points that I wish to make on the three amendments. I am not quite clear whether we shall have one or three votes, but clearly the amendments require individual attention. It might be greatly to the advantage of the House if we were to divide on each of them, but that is a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Neil Thorne: (Ilford, South): I shall try to deal with the points as they arose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) said that the 300 stallholders had an average of two stalls each, making a total of 600, and that there was no waiting list. I found that rather surprising because on a previous occasion I said that Redbridge had had 250 applications for the 80 stalls. If stallholders were to have two stalls each, there would be only 40 possible opportunities. That would suggest that a number of stallholders in Romford believe that they could profitably have a stall in the Redbridge market, too, and therefore have confidence in a demand which others have suggested does not exist.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Is not my hon. Friend ignoring the fact that it is well known that Redbridge market is seeking the right to remain open for six days a week? It is absolutely wrong for him to suggest that market traders would be in Romford for our three days and in his constituency for the other three days. It is much more likely that they would decide to set up their stalls for six days in the same place rather than to-ing and fro-ing. That would make a great deal of economic sense and is one reason why I oppose him so strongly.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend does not understand market traders as well as I thought he did. If he did, he would appreciate that market traders normally work as a family and that the father, mother, daughters and sons are usually in the business together. They are likely to have a stall in Bexley on the same day as they have a stall in Romford, and it is very likely that they will want a stall at Ilford on the same day. So I do not think that there is likely to be any such conflict. They are unlikely to move into Redbridge and ignore Romford. Romford is a substantial, well-established and viable market with 600 stalls and an established clientele which I do not think will be affected in any way by an 80-stall market at Ilford.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I understand market traders well enough to know that none of their families are sitting on their backsides waiting for the legislation to go through the House. It is nonsense to say, as my hon. Friend suggests, that they are unoccupied at the moment. Of course, Romford is a well-established, successful and thriving market. That is because it has enjoyed statutory protection for nearly 1,000 years. My hon. Friend is trying to destroy that success and stability and that is why he is wrong.

Mr. Thorne: As I said on a previous occasion, I do not under any circumstances agree that a market of 80 stalls can possibly undermine a 600-stall market at Romford. I have visited Romford market for more years than I care to remember and I shall continue to do so. I believe that the matter of a small market in Ilford is purely coincidental, so I do not think that my hon. Friend makes a relevant point.

Mr. Squire: None the less, it is worth recording that if it were merely coincidental, the question of compensation would not have been discussed or put into the Bill. That is a recognition that it is more than coincidental. Obviously, my hon. Friend is making the case for the Bill, but even he would accept that.

Mr. Thorne: I said to my hon. Friend previously that I accepted the compensation provisions purely and simply because the Opposed Bills Committee which considered the matter in considerable detail, on the advice of counsel appointed by the respective councils, reached that conclusion. That was not my view. I felt that it was extremely generous and unnecessary, particularly as on only two days in the week would there be any conflict between what Havering does at Romford market and what Redbridge wishes to do.

Mr. Bendall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the many markets in east London which are very close together all do exceptionally well and that there is no deterioration of business in any of them?

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The number of markets encourages people to use them. I believe that when people have successfully visited some of the stalls in Ilford market, they will be more ambitious and will see what the 600 stalls in Romford market have to offer. I have every confidence that within a year or two of the passing of the Bill, by the will of the House, both markets will be thriving even more than now. That is my honest belief.

I am informed that no protection is sought for Redbridge market, so it is unlikely that a six and two thirds mile limit will be relevant. The calculation of compensation was dealt with on a previous occasion.

Mr. O'Brien: Compensation was decided on the understanding that the market would operate six days a week. Do not proposals for Sunday trading alter the formula for assessing compensation?

Mr. Thorne: I think not, because the proposal of the Opposed Bills Committee would still apply. That measure was not sought by the London borough of Redbridge. Redbridge has been most diligent in applying the Shops Act 1950 and insisting that shops shall not trade on Sunday. It has been far more diligent in enforcing the law in that regard than any other authority in the neighbourhood. There is no reason to suppose that the borough would agree to allow Sunday trading in the market in advance of a decision to the contrary by the House. Any question of letting the land to another operator would be on the condition that it were not used in that way. There is no question but that the authority did not apply for Sunday trading. If the House wishes to give that right, it will be accepted but not used.

Mr. O'Brien: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely. The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said that amendment No. 2 is an enabling amendment. If the constitution of the council changed after an election, it could use the amendment to allow Sunday trading, although the present council opposes it. Is not there a danger that the amendment may lead to the principles and policies of the council being ignored or disregarded? I suggest that we should reject amendment No. 2 to ensure that the council's principles are adhered to.

Mr. Thorne: I should be happy if all three amendments were rejected. Amendment No. 2 would enable the council to hold a market on Sunday. The council has been Conservative-controlled for the past 25 years, but if it were to change another political party might decide differently.

Mr. Bendall: Such a change could not be made if the premises, property or land on which the market will be situated were let and there was a clear clause in the contract not permitting Sunday trading.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend is right. I assume that tenants may apply for a waiver if they wish. If the landlord agreed to a waiver, there could be Sunday trading. But I am not asking the House to pass the amendment any more than I am asking it to pass the other two. If the House decides to give the authority such a power, it will accept it but not use it.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) asked about prohibition, but that was not requested.

It has been suggested that the Bill is likely to lead to a stampede for waivers for markets. The private Bill procedure is expensive and takes a long time. Authorities are not likely to rush into it unless they are convinced that it is the right thing to do.

Hon. Members asked how many constituencies are likely to be affected by the Bill. My constituency does not stretch six and two thirds miles in any direction. In large constituencies the distance between markets would not be a problem because they would probably be under the same local authority. It is wrong to suggest that 284 charter markets are likely to be adversely affected by the Bill.

Mr. Bendall: When the original limit of six and two thirds miles was set, London had not spread out to the extent that it has now, which is obviously why that limit was set in those days.

Mr. Thorne: Indeed.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East raised the question of union interests in shops. Norwich Union and Prudential are developing a substantial shopping mall in my constituency. They believe that a street market would help the promotion of the centre. Far from detracting from the interests of shop workers, it would enhance their numbers and their pay bargaining opportunities. I have no doubt that the proposed market would benefit workers in Ilford.

8.15 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Gentleman is saying that the market would be generally beneficial to the area, but I assume that it would not operate on Sundays.

Mr. Thorne: That is right. Sunday trading in the market would be unfair to the other shops in the area, and the council would not grant permission for it. Moreover, I am certain that it would stipulate in the lease that the market could not open on Sundays. As I said before, I shall not ask the House to vote for any of the three amendments.

I was asked several technical questions by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). Those issues would be dealt with in exactly the same way as his authority deals with technical matters relating to Romford market. There is no intention to require anything different.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster made considerable play of the fact that it has been requested that the market should open six days a week. It is clear that market traders would use the market only as and when they wanted to, and there is nothing to prevent his authority from opening its market on Monday, Tuesday or Thursday as well as Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Redbridge would not object to it doing so.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend has fallen into a trap. My authority would not wish the market to open on those days because there is insufficient room for it to trade.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend does not appreciate that if there is no demand there is no question of forcing street traders to trade on those days. If they wish to take a stall at Ilford market on another day they can do so, just as they could in Romford market. If there is no demand, the market will not open.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: If there is no demand, my hon. Friend's local authority will discover that its market does not work, but in so discovering it will have destroyed Romford market.

Mr. Thorne: I cannot in any circumstances accept that Romford market, which has 600 stalls and which is extremely well run and viable, will be affected by a market five and a half miles away with a maximum of 80 stalls. It is not sensible to make such a suggestion. If anyone will suffer, Ilford market will suffer most and more immediately. The council would not proceed with the market if it were not viable. It would therefore have wasted its money obtaining the Act of Parliament to give it permission for the market. I am not so despondent, because I believe that Redbridge and Havering markets will be successful. In three years' time, both will be extremely viable and well run.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Gentleman said that the council would not pursue the market if it were not viable, but having given such a commitment and having sponsored the Bill, it may give the benefit of the doubt to the market being viable in the future. The act of seeking the legislation will influence its attitude in the future.

Mr. Thorne: The hon. Gentleman said that the local authority might find that the market was not running economically. However, the district auditor would have something to say if the London borough of Redbridge started to try to run an unviable market. The London borough of Redbridge is an extremely cautious and careful authority. It manages its street markets well and does not enter into enterprises that it thinks will be unviable in the first place. If it were later to find an enterprise unviable, it would not subsidise it to give an unfair advantage to its market over another. In those circumstances, I hope that the House will decide to reject all three amendments.

Mr. Squire: I sense that the House wishes to move to a Division and I do not want to detain it long. I have listened—as ever—carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne). The position with the Bill is rather as it is with much legislation in this Chamber. My hon. Friend cannot say that he is certain what the outcome will be, any more than the rest of us can. It seems logical that it will, more likely than not, lead to similar legislation coming before us. That seems to be the nature of things, but I do not want to go over the arguments again.

I noted my hon. Friend's comments on the wording of amendment No. 2 and, in the circumstances, I recognise that it might make little difference were it put to the vote. I also realise that I may be missing a few of the 400 hon. Members whom I mentioned earlier as taking part in such a Division.

As the central issue for those resisting the Bill is that Havering is being asked to give a compulsory licence in perpetuity to grant another market rights in competition, we shall seek to divide the House on amendment No. 3—subject to your comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker—which seeks to limit the operation of that market.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 3, in page 2, line 18, at end insert

'save that the market shall not be held on more than two days a week'.—*[Mr. Squire.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 44, Noes 77.

Division No. 98] **[8.22 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Burt, Alistair
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A E P
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Flynn, Paul
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Meale, Alan
Miller, Sir Hal
Mullin, Chris
Neubert, Michael
O Brien, William
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Sir Nicholas Bonsor

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Aspinwall, Jack
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Riddick, Graham
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wheeler, Sir John
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Amess and
Mr. Tim Boswell

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 6

AS TO TRANSFER OF RIGHTS

8.30 pm

Mr. Squire: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 4, leave out lines 16 and 17.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 6, in page 4, line 17, at end add "if the trade to be carried out by the purchaser is materially different to that which is undertaken by the vendor".

Mr. Squire: Obviously I am marginally disappointed at the outcome of the Division, but I shall try again.

The debate on these amendments will be much more specific than the one that has just ended. I suppose that even I can admit that I am tackling a fairly obscure part of the Bill—its last sentence. It is appropriate that amendments Nos. 5 and 6 should be taken together, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your wisdom, have decided. The central point is why it is necessary to have the last sentence:

"Provided that such transfer or disposal of rights shall take effect without the consent in writing of the Council."

I am advised that, in respect of ordinary trading, there is no similar right. If a person who has run a greengrocery shop for 10 years wishes to sell that shop to another greengrocer, he may do so without reference to anybody else. The parties may make the appropriate arrangements and agree a price, and everything will proceed. As hon. Members with local authority experience will know, the local authority has to be consulted only if there is to be a change of use. If, for example, a greengrocer is to be taken over by a bank or a building society, different procedures apply. But those procedures are restricted to cases in which there is a proposed change of use; the Shops Act 1950 makes no reference to anyone requiring further approval if there is to be no change of use. In those circumstances, why is this provision necessary? The change that I propose would have the effect of bringing the matter into line with the provisions of the Shops Act.

We do not know—certainly we do not know tonight—the nature of the stalls that will be run in Ilford. There is nothing about that in the Bill. We can go only by the reasonably brief exchanges that took place in Committee. According to those exchanges, Redbridge has confirmed that greengrocers and clothes stores would be limited in number, that car accessory sales would not be permitted—a matter that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor)—and that the sale of live animals, fish and raw fish was likely to be prohibited. However—this is an important ancillary point—the Bill contains nothing about those limitations.

But all this tells us nothing about the need for the final words in the Bill. I have stressed that this is a small amendment, but the form of the Bill should be as close as possible to the Shops Act, which recognises that there is no need for the council to be involved in the simple replacement of one business by another of identical type. Of course, it will be up to the House to decide the precise form of the legislation, but I see no need for the council to be involved. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), in advance of his explanation, that, at first sight, this seems to be to be the very reverse of the free-market approach which, on other occasions, he has been so willing to endorse. This provision is unnecessary. It retains a council involvement where none is needed. In those circumstances, I put forward the amendments.

Mr. Thorne: The purpose of the last sentence of the Bill is to make provision for good management. I am assured that, although it is not written into any statute for the benefit of Havering, that London borough chooses to confirm that the transfer of stores shall be by reference to it, and not automatically down a line of family members. That is only fair and reasonable. It will ensure good market management. It will ensure that traders who give good value for money—in other words, desirable people—are encouraged to trade at this market, and that people who are not likely to be good stallholders are discouraged.

The London borough of Redbridge has no wish to be unduly restrictive, but it wants to retain the right to approve people who wish to trade. It does not want some families of people to be in a position to monopolise stalls throughout east and south-east London. It believes that that would be a bad thing. For that reason, a modicum of control is necessary, but subject to that alone the London borough of Redbridge is most anxious that free and fair trading should be given every opportunity.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for this opportunity to comment because if the Bill is passed and other markets follow suit the amendment would have a major effect on what would happen locally on my patch. I am also concerned about the general principle embodied in clause 6, which seems extremely odd, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) pointed out.

The clause implies that there will be something unique about markets in future. If someone wishes to set up shop, he can do so in the knowledge that he can dispose of that shop—a greengrocer's or hairdresser's shop or whatever so long as there is no change of use. All is well—he can go ahead and sell the business. That will have quite an effect on his decision to set up in business in the first place and on how he assesses his competitiveness.

If the owner of a shop had to bear it in mind from the start that he could not necessarily dispose of his premises if he wished, he might not enter into the enterprise in the first place. Likewise, if someone who is considering setting up a market or becoming a part of a market finds that he may be refused permission to dispose of his enterprise unless the council agrees he may think twice. After all, he can have no possible knowledge of what the composition of the council will be or how it may view the matter in a few years' time. He cannot know what his competitive position will be and he cannot possibly make any sensible estimates for the future. He simply will not know whether it is worth becoming a part of a market or setting up a market or joining an enterprise or becoming financially involved. He will have no idea because he will not know whether he can dispose of the enterprise in the same way as he could if it were a shop. That is most peculiar. It seems that we are being asked to grant rights in relation to a market but then to place over it such an enormous unbusinesslike cloud that it will be extremely difficult for anyone to make a sensible decision about whether to become part of it.

If I proposed to set up an enterprise and I was told "Sorry, normal planning rules will not apply—the council can decide at whim, even on a political whim, to tell you

that you cannot dispose of your asset as you wish," I should have to think twice about whether it would be worth engaging in such a business.

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend makes a powerful case. Has she considered the possibility of there being a favourite son or daughter who the council may wish to take over the enterprise? As the Bill stands, that son or daughter would be able to take over by courtesy of the local authority.

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed, and I have not even come on to the question of abuse. I was merely considering the general principles involved and whether we should permit such an eccentric ruling to apply. My hon. Friend is perfectly right that the potential for abuse is vast. As I said, that could happen if the council changed its political complexion——

8.45 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must draw it to the hon. Lady's attention that she is straying wide of the amendments before us

Miss Widdecombe: I must be guided by your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, the amendment would nullify the effect of line 17, which says that no transfer or disposal of right shall take effect without the consent in writing of the council. I am endeavouring to explore—with your permission, sir—whether leaving the council with such a wide discretion, completely separate from all regulations currently in force, could have a detrimental effect on the provisions of the rest of the Bill. If the Bill is an enabling Bill to allow such markets and such franchises, it seems peculiar that this mammoth restriction should be built into it. I seek your ruling, sir. Am I in order or am I as wide of the amendment as you implied?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I suggest that the hon. Lady should not take her argument further than she has outlined.

Miss Widdecombe: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Encouraged by your ruling, I should like to explore the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch.

If the Bill remains unamended and the council has blanket powers in future, those powers could be abused. I suggest that the possibility of such abuse and the need to take due cognisance of it must be part of the commercial decision of a person engaging in an enterprise. Is it sensible that they should be tied down in this way? Might it not be more sensible to bring the Bill into line with the Shops Act, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch suggested.

I do not wish to trespass on your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I suggest that political considerations could apply. Someone considering engaging in such an enterprise could reasonably ask, "Do I trust this council? It may be like my local council, which undergoes swings and is never in the control of one party for very long. Is it worth my engaging in this enterprise, given that that sort of council exists?" That is an important consideration.

It seems right for my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch to suggest that we look for a more suitable framework and see whether existing laws are adequate to allow any potential trader to operate and feel reasonably safe. That is the point of the amendment. It would bring us back to a change of use. If one is selling a greengrocer's shop to a greengrocer, that is fine. What one may not do is to sell a greengrocer's shop to somebody who wishes to sell pets or chemicals.

The amendment is eminently reasonable and I have heard no argument to negate my hon. Friend's point. This is a special Bill, which grants rights to one particular market, but it could have a chain effect. It is because of the potential chain effect that I am anxious that we get this right. I am not worried about this particular special market but I am worried about what will happen if the Bill becomes a basis for future franchises and future markets. I have heard nothing to suggest that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch was not right that this is an eccentric clause—on top of the fact that the Bill takes one particular area and does something special for it.

People may be so entirely cavalier in deciding whether to engage in an enterprise that they do not care how they will dispose of it if it does not work or if their personal circumstances change, but I think that unlikely. In any event, an important principle is surely involved. We have an adequate law which has been respected and has stood the test of time and which, moreover, has been well understood by councils, local politicians and traders alike. We should therefore try to stay within that framework as far as possible. I cannot see the slightest reason for this highly eccentric individual rule which will not apply to anything else. That, too, is an important consideration.

If somebody wishes to become involved in an enterprise of this sort, he will look around to see what is there, not only in terms of no markets but, more importantly, in terms of fixed trading. He will know that the fixed trader has an advantage that he does not have under these eccentric provisions. What effect will that have? My hon. Friend said that the amendment was a small one. I contend that even if the Bill is sensible and intends to enable what it sets out to enable—my hon. Friend may disagree with me on that but I am prepared to give the sponsors the benefit of the doubt—the last two lines of the clause make it as hard as possible for those who want to take advantage of it to do so. That seems a peculiar position.

The sponsors may say that they wanted to give the council wider powers, perhaps because markets are a little different from fixed traders—they can become a nuisance and the citizens may not react favourably to them—and if market forces do not apply, perhaps the council should have some say. The Bill is a way of giving the councils some say. In that case, surely it is sensible to spell out a set of limitations, perhaps more restrictive than the Shops Act 1950 but less restrictive than this eccentric blanket proposal. Had that been suggested, there would have been some merit in those two lines.

It is most extraordinary. The promoters of the Bill have not intervened once to explain why this eccentric measure——

Mr. Thorne: Is my hon. Friend waiting for an intervention?

Miss Widdecombe: I am delighted to take one if my hon. Friend is offering one.

Mr. Thorne: I have already addressed the House, but perhaps I could be allowed to intervene to answer the points that my hon. Friend has made. First, it is normal for a landlord to have a right to approve a change of tenant. That is a normal procedure and is therefore quite normal

[Mr. Thorne]

in this case. On the question of whether people should have an automatic right, the London borough of Havering and most other councils which control markets find it desirable to be able to stipulate whether they approve of the person to whom the market trader intends to pass on his stall. They do not wish to do so for reasons of nepotism or anything of that sort but simply to ensure that the trader who takes over is honest and reliable and will provide a reasonable service to the community. That is a perfectly reasonable thing for the public to expect. That is why the council would wish to be involved in that process. It would not wish to interfere unnecessarily but simply to make sure that standards are maintained.

Miss Widdecombe: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that elucidation. It introduces some logic into a position which hitherto seemed wholly illogical. I see the force of his argument that there must be some control over the nature of the tenant, his honesty, and so on, but once again—unless my hon. Friend can help me—I cannot relate that to the perfectly satisfactory position under the Shops Act whereby unless change of use is involved the transfer is more or less automatic, so there could be an unscrupulous tenant or a person of whom the council or landlord did not approve but that would not be the governing factor. The governing factors would be established planning and the tradition of the area and those shops.

If what my hon. Friend says is what he intended, I say again what I said just now. It would have been better if the limitations to which he referred had been spelt out. That would be better than a blanket measure which says that the council can refuse. It would not have to give reasons but would merely give or withhold consent. There is no guarantee whatever that the reasons would be honourable.

I have no reason to suppose that any council would engage in nepotism, but there is no safeguard against such abuse in the lines of the Bill to which I referred. The Bill gives an enormous remit. It simply says:

"without the consent in writing"

but says nothing about the conditions on which such consent should be based, the honesty, integrity or standards of the incoming tenant. There is not the remotest hint of that. It is just a blanket provision whereby councils may refuse, so a council could refuse for a whole host of bad reasons as well as a whole host of good reasons.

Although I should quickly be called to order if I dared to do so—I shall not do so—one could draw many parallels with other Acts where we define carefully what a council may or may not do, including the Shops Act. It is faintly surprising that on this occasion we have chosen to include a blanket provision. It has been explained, but it is still completely unqualified.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I am following my hon. Friend's argument with interest. Does she accept that the circumstances of a market are slightly different from those of a row of shops? One knows that simply from practical experience. Market traders are close up against one another. They can move from stall to stall and, indeed, may be seen doing so. Property can, as it were, move sideways. In contrast, shops are normally separate lock-up establishments in a defined space and much easier to defend. I fully understand the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), which bear on the issue of security. There may be some constitutional points in the argument which my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) advances. Nevertheless, they do not deal with the essential issue of market security.

Miss Widdecombe: I agree that reasons of security and the character of the landlord, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South put forward, are perfectly good reasons, but I return to the point that I was making—that none of those reasons has been defined. If an exhaustive list of reasons is not to be given—I accept that that would be impractical—the promoters could have attempted some limitation on the blanket proposal that a council should be able to withhold or give consent without any specified limitations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) is right that there is a difference between a market and a row of shops. We can all immediately see the difference. It is therefore extraordinary that we should give protection to owners of shops, which are permanently in situ if something goes wrong but take less stringent action for markets, which are more fluid.

In conclusion—you will be relieved to hear me say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker—this is too much of a blanket proposal. If the Bill is successful, its effects will be felt not just in the individual case for which we are so eccentrically legislating, but throughout the country.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Are they such blanket provisions as the hon. Lady suggests? The amendment relates to the removal of a veto exercised by a council. It is not a matter of grace and favour in the hands of the council so that it can positively take action in an area, although I grant that if the veto were used often enough it could operate in such a way.

Miss Widdecombe: No, indeed. I was saying that a trader has to consider at the beginning the commercial viability of a project over which, according to the Bill, the council is to have unfettered rights of veto—I repeat, simply of veto. A trader may wish to dispose of his interest in the enterprise, but a veto exists. If a trader is disposing of a shop, he knows the terms under which a veto can be applied. He knows, for example, that if there is to be no change of use he can sell his bakery shop to another baker and all is well. We are not giving the same protection to a market trader, so anyone engaging in such an enterprise will be subject to the whims, the political inclinations, the nepotisms and all the other possible abuses or simply the sheer incompetencies of the council.

Mr. Barnes: Is the hon. Lady saying that the sponsors should have produced a set of conditions or that the rest of us should have been responsible for tabling amendments to set out a list of conditions which would have been stronger than those outlined in amendment No. 6? Presumably the hon. Lady feels that that amendment would improve the position, but that it would not be so good as acceptance of amendment No. 5.

9 pm

Miss Widdecombe: Amendment No. 6 absolutely and ideally takes care of what I am saying. Having given the right of veto to a council, which is perfectly proper—I do

not wish to prevent a council having the right of veto—it states the grounds on which the veto may be exercised. Those grounds are exactly the same as those set out in the Shops Act. When a trader started in an enterprise, he would know from the start that so long as there was no change of use and he continued the operations previously undertaken and then sold the enterprise to someone who would carry on the same trade, everything would be all right. Under the Bill as it stands, the trader does not even have that consolation. Indeed, he has no consolation at all.

Even if that state of affairs does not prey on the minds of traders, as I believe that it will, it opens up every last possibility for abuse. Under amendment No. 5, the council can give a veto under certain stipulated conditions which seem to be logical and in the public interest. I should certainly wish them to be applied if this situation ever arose in my constituency. That is reasonable. What I do not think is reasonable is the complete blanket proposal. I do not understand why the sponsors have not accepted the amendment. It seems such a logical thing to do. Not only would it save much argument and time, but it would produce a better Bill at the end of it all.

I was in the middle of summarising my case when the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) intervened. If the effects of the Bill are repeated elsewhere, two sets of trading rights will be created—those applying to a person with a permanent establishment and those applying to a person who operates in a market. If the trading rights are to be established in such a way that they militate against market traders, who will have no guarantee of commercial stability and when they take on an asset will not know whether they will be able to dispose of it, and if we put into the hands of councils certain powers that they do not have in any other area—the power to exercise a blanket veto without any reference in law as to the considerations on which the veto should be based and with nothing on the face of the Bill about what criteria should guide their decisions and inform their judgments—the possibilities for abuse are so obvious that they hardly need spelling out.

Those abuses need not be political or nepotistic. A council might simply have taken a financial decision which suddenly makes it inopportune to have a viable market where previously there was one. The council might then decide to proceed by way of piecemeal planning destruction. That is a perfectly reasonable possibility. Unless there is something to limit the right of veto and to spell out the factors on which a council should base its decisions, the provisions seem much too dangerous.

I do not have a view on the area affected because it does not fall within my responsibility to have such a view, but I certainly have a view as to what might be repeated in my own constituency, where there is an old established market and in constituencies such as mine with totally unreliable councils which swing from one party to another and from one policy to another. This is an extremely dangerous and nasty little blanket power, and it is completely unnecessary. The Bill could have been amended a long time ago if the sponsors had listened to reason. I commend my hon. Friend's amendment to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The Question is that the amendment be made——

Mr. Squire *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) seeking the Floor?

Mr. Squire: I do so simply as the mover of the amendment, Madam Deputy Speaker—and to say how nice it is to see you. I have been moved by the classic demolition of the sentence in question by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe). You were right, Madam Deputy Speaker—my speech was pallid in comparison with that of my hon. Friend. I concede that there is a major principle at stake here and we should divide on it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes, 30, Noes 65.

Division No. 99] **[9.05 pm**

AYES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Cox, Tom
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A E P
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Meale, Alan
Neubert, Michael
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Bob Cryer

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Dame Janet
Fry, Peter
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Riddick, Graham
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Wheeler, Sir John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. David Amess

Question accordingly negatived.

Adelphi Estate Bill (By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.—*[Sir John Wheeler.]*

9.16 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Bill has apparently been taken on the nod, but I am interested in the repeal of certain statutory restrictions upon the development of land on the north side of the river Thames, between Westminster bridge and Blackfriars bridge. The House is owed an explanation before we pass the Bill on the nod.

I realise that this is the Third Reading and that there have been preceding stages

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Second Reading.

Mr. Cryer: There may have been a preceding stage. You read the Question mellifluously, Madam Deputy Speaker. I misheard "second" for "third".

On Second Reading, it behoves the House to have an explanation. I am sure that my hon. Friends, with their desire for keen scrutiny and examination, would want a brief explanation from the Bill's promoter, the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler). I am not asking for a debate lasting an hour and a half, but it would be handy to have an outline of the legislation.

The passage of legislation such as this is recorded in *Hansard*. People who may be affected by the Bill will wish to read that. If the Bill is pushed through on the nod, people may consider that to be a contemptuous way in which to treat a Bill which is so nicely set out and which affects people.

Therefore, I hope that the Bill's sponsor will give us an explanation. I see him leaning forward in his place with an air of eager confidence ready to share his thoughts with us.

9.18 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am delighted to address the House on this modest little measure. If hon. Members wish me to take considerable time, I shall be delighted to assist them therewith. I could begin with a recital of history going back to the reign of our late sovereign King George III, when legislation was passed in 1771 to enclose part of the embankment adjacent to the river Thames, resulting in that delightful piece of property now known as the Adelphi, but I apprehend, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the House will wish me to leap from 1771 to 1990.

I shall therefore discuss the modest nature of the Bill. Its sole purpose is to repeal three Acts of Parliament dating back to 1771. One provision which remains unspent from those three Acts is section 34 of the Adelphi Estate Act 1933, which restricts the height of buildings on the estate. The proposed repeal in the Bill before us is of that provision, which would leave any proposal to raise the height of buildings to the planning committee of the local authority, in this case the council of the City of Westminster, rather than to Parliament.

I know that the House does not like to authorise works and planning consent through small, private planning Bills, but in this instance all the Bill would do would be to transfer the responsibility to the planning authority. I understand that the promoters of the Bill have already made planning application to it, so that is a matter for the planning committee to decide.

That is the nature of the Bill. I have nothing further to say about it.

Mr. Cryer: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what the reason was for the restriction on height? Was it an aesthetic reason? Is the Bill proposed in order to enable the development of ugly skyscrapers and multi-rise blocks?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I cannot engage upon a debate this evening as to the character of any extension. All I can say is that, in the City of Westminster, the beauty of the buildings is of great concern to the planning committee. No doubt it would wish to take those factors into account.

9.22 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) has not given us much to go on. I have grave concern about why we should want to remove the protection on height and give power to Westminster city council, when we are all aware of the record of that council. While one might be prepared to repeal old Acts if other authorities were involved, one looks at the Bill suspiciously and with grave doubt when it covers Westminster city council.

The hon. Gentleman did not identify the area of the site, how important it is and the implications of altering the skyline and allowing development to take place. He said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that there are fine buildings of character in Westminster; he is not referring to some of the buildings which many of us see, because some appalling developments have been approved by Westminster city council. If we are to judge them by the criteria which Westminster city council has used in recent years, I am doubtful about the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: As my hon. Friend pointed out, I sought further information, which I did not get. The Bill refers to buildings

"which may be erected, built or piled upon the said lands".

As the site is on the side of a river, there may be reasonable engineering reasons for limiting the weight of buildings. Behind the Bill may lie the complete removal of existing buildings to allow deep piling, using modern engineering techniques, and the construction of buildings which are out of character and different from the existing buildings.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend makes an obviously valid point. In the days before we had planning legislation, which was introduced by the Labour Government soon after the war, there were many calculated and deliberate ways to control development. The legislation that this Bill seeks to repeal is one such example.

I know that, in the case of my own house, the development was planned in Victorian times, when it was laid down that the house to be built should have a rentable value of not less than £72 a year, and at that time that determined the character of the building. I forget what year the hon. Gentleman said that this legislation dated from, but it was certainly some years ago, long before we had planning Acts, and it was intended to control the type

of development on this important site, adjacent to the river. Many people may feel that that legislation is the best way to contain developments, and it may well be.

If one considers what we have allowed to happen to the riverside—the river Thames which runs through the capital of this country—then I think that in many cases we should be ashamed of the developments that have taken place along it.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is sitting on the Front Bench. I know that Government buildings are controlled in a different way, but I have to say that Government buildings, and even the Department of the Environment's building in Marsham street, are no credit to the skyline of Westminster, because they are disgraceful developments.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North needs to give us more insight if we are to be persuaded to allow the Bill to make further progress. I recognise that the Bill is at an early stage, but it is likely to suffer a stormy passage unless we get more assurances about why it is sought——

Mr. Cryer: Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the way in which my inquiries seeking further information have been dealt with? They were left entirely with Westminster planning committee. This House, which gives consideration to primary legislation, is being treated with contempt, because we are not allowed any sort of information about what lies behind this very expensive, if it is adopted, private legislation.

Does my hon. Friend not think that we should have at least the same sort of information that is submitted to the local authority planning committee?

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I would have expected the hon. Member for Westminster, North to make a longer speech to convince the House why this should happen. We all know of the events within Westminster council—one does not know whether the planning committee has a better reputation. Other aspects of the council, such as Westminster cemeteries, give cause for grave concern in the Chamber tonight.

When I came into the Chamber, I was not aware of the implications of the Bill. I expected the hon. Member for Westminster, North to explain why the House should consider the measure. However, he had to be pressed to make any comment at all. He merely moved the Second Reading formally; it was only when my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South pressed him that he made any statement—it must have been one of the shortest speeches in support of a Second Reading that I have ever heard.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Should the hon. Member for Westminster, North not have explained to us in greater detail the nature of the 1771, 1933 and 1938 legislation? I know that it is up to hon. Members to have gone to the Library and sought the information. For instance, the Adelphi Estate Act refers to various types of buildings which are appropriate, but we have not been informed what they are. In the absence of having been able to find out the details of the legislation, we have an hon. Member in the House who is involved and who should be explaining matters to us so that we can make a reasonably mature judgment.

Mr. Pike: Indeed. I understand that certain provisions in the 1771 Act are to be removed, leaving no control over the height of buildings other than what is considered appropriate by Westminster council. That is worrying. In theory, a building could be erected high enough to beat the Shell building or the NatWest tower, which might be entirely inappropriate to the site on which it was built. Of course we are keen on developments where they are needed, if they improve London as a tourist attraction and the capital of a major nation, but the hon. Member for Westminster, North has not convinced me that that will happen.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend has reminded me of what I believe to be historical fact—perhaps the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) could confirm this. I believe that, in the 1920s or 1930s, some altercation took place about this very site. I seem to recall an historic building being demolished to make way for the existing building, which is neither unusual nor impressive.

My hon. Friend mentioned the NatWest tower. I also seem to remember some controversy about a "green giant" that was to be built not far upstream from the Houses of Parliament. Can the hon. Member for Westminster, North reassure us that the Bill would not permit such a development?

Mr. Pike: It is indeed possible that the council could, under the Bill, approve a development similar to the "green giant", which I believe was to be built on the opposite bank. A good deal of anxiety was expressed at the time. I think most people would agree that we have failed to take advantage of most of our post-war opportunities to develop and improve London's Thames banks. A possible exception is some of the original south bank development, but in general we have failed to make the river into a focal point for the people of London and the country as a whole, as well as visiting tourists. It is different in Paris: no such desecration of the river Seine has been permitted.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has considerable experience of local government, having been a council leader. What standard of information would he have expected Burnley council to present if it were seeking opportunities for development through the repeal of existing restrictions? Surely, as leader of a local authority, he would have given Parliament much more information than we have been given in justification of the Bill.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If Burnley council were promoting such a measure, it would have provided a detailed information pack, explaining not only the development that it envisaged but why it envisaged it.

I did not intend to speak for very long. I hope that the hon. Member for Westminster, North will give us more positive reasons for supporting the Bill: if he is unable to do so, he will find himself struggling to get the Bill through, although it may be given a Second Reading tonight—and that is still in question.

Mr. Cryer: It is important that my hon. Friend should dwell on his local government experience. There is an important parallel to be drawn. It may seem trivial in comparison, but the local borough in my hon. Friend's constituency has developed the verges of the Leeds and Liverpool canal in a way that is attractive and pleasing to the eye. It has taken time, patience and careful consideration to provide a view of the waterside that is

[Mr. Cryer]

pleasing to the inhabitants of Burnley. I should like my hon. Friend to elaborate on why we should not insist on being given information——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) could elaborate on Burnley's virtues—but not tonight, and not on this Bill.

Mr. Pike: I shall not allow my hon. Friend to lead me astray. However, Burnley has done that. It has put together a very good proposal, with Lancashire county council.

I came here in order to hear what the hon. Member for Westminster, North had to say about the Bill. I saw that it had been set down on the Order Paper. I wanted to find out exactly what it entailed. It is an important site. It is next to a major river, the river Thames, in our capital city. Parliament should ensure that the site is safeguarded. We must not allow it to be desecrated. If we do not provide adequate safeguards, future generations will blame not Westminster city council but this House and the hon. Member for Westminster, North.

9.37 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Opposition Members have had a go at the Bill off the cuff. I did not see any of them look at the Bill, or at the promoters' statement. I have at least read the Bill and the statement.

Opposition Members referred to piling in connection with the redevelopment at the site. Paragraph 8 of the statement says:

"The Promoters of the Bill own the Adelphi building and wish to enlarge and improve it by adding two storeys to it."

I am a chartered surveyor. If additional storeys are added to a building, that increases the load on the foundations. No one in his right mind would increase the load on the foundations of an existing building without looking at them to make sure that they are up to carrying the additional load.

According to the promoters' statement, they want to add only two storeys. The Adelphi is a large building that was constructed in 1933. I notice that the plans have been approved by the Royal Fine Art Commission and English Heritage.

Mr. Pike: Can the hon. Gentleman give the House an absolute assurance that, if the Bill is passed as it stands, it will not be just a sweetener and that as soon as the matter is in the hands of Westminster city council a different proposal will not be made? That is what happened with Battersea power station.

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman believes that I have rather more influence than I enjoy. I have no influence over either Westminster city council or the future of the Adelphi building. The hon. Gentleman said that this is a great city. Nothing can stand still; full use must be made of the building.

The promoters' statement refers to the 1771 Act which "authorised the Adam brothers and other owners of land adjacent to the River Thames to inclose and embank a stretch of the River".

When estates were laid out and developed in those days, the buildings were not designed to last for two centuries. Normally the freeholders granted ground leases for a certain term, so the buildings were not designed to last any longer than the leases. After all, who would design a building to last 200 years when the lease for the building is for only 50 years?

On many occasions I have rung up the district surveyor about buildings which now stand in conservation areas to ask about the condition of houses in a particular street on behalf of a client—that was before I was elected to Parliament. The first thing he said was, "They are falling down." That puts one on notice. When one examines the building, one finds all the usual defects associated with houses of that age and type—bulging brickwork, sagging roof timbers and evidence that the foundations have settled.

Mr. Cryer: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that that applies to that building? I cannot recall it in the promoters' statement. The hon. Gentleman may be making a general case that has considerable merit, but we are talking about one building and I must ask him to distinguish between general observations and the condition of the building.

Mr. Summerson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman made that point. A building erected in 1933 would have been far more substantial than any houses the Adam brothers ever built because its construction is far more sophisticated. It should be well able to sustain the additional two-storey load that the promoters are suggesting.

It seems to me that there is nothing hidden within the Bill to cause alarm and despondency to the Opposition. It seems a perfectly reasonable proposition and I very much hope that the House will give it a Second Reading.

9.42 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The House should know what the Bill is doing. I do not think that the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) explained it to us in terms of the legislation which is being replaced. The Bill and the promoters' statement show us what the Bill intends to do, but that depends on what it intends to sweep aside.

I have managed to obtain copies of the Adelphi Estate Acts 1933 and 1938. I do not yet have the original Act of 1771 because, like my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who became interested in the debate as he heard it developing, I am a hangover from a previous debate. Had not my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) encouraged the hon. Member for Westminster, North to explain the Bill a little, we would have passed it on the nod in an entirely blind fashion.

The Adelphi Estate Act 1933 is a considerable piece of legislation with 38 clauses and 40 pages. The 1938 Act is a smaller amending measure, but the details of the Adelphi estate in the 1933 Act cover many wider considerations.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is saying that an entire 40-page Act is to be repealed by this measure without any list in the schedule of repeals of the ground covered by the repeals. That is not uncommon where repeals are carried out by public Acts. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) has given us no explanation of the extent of the repeals.

Mr. Barnes: I am trying to get the hon. Member for Westminster, North to explain the details of the Bill. It seems that we must refer to previous legislation to flush him out.

The 1933 Act is wide ranging. It amends the 1771 legislation and refers to the Adelphi foreground and the ability to build thereon. The 1771 Act is in the cellar, but the Library is trying to unearth it. When it does so, we shall find that sections 3 and 4 have been repealed by the 1933 Act.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for that information. Is my hon. Friend telling the House that the promoter has not placed the 1771 legislation in the Vote Office so that the best possible information is available to hon. Members? I should like my hon. Friend to elaborate on that and to explain how difficult it is to obtain such information.

Mr. Barnes: The short notice that hon. Members are given of private Bills makes it difficult for them to obtain information from the Vote Office. I obtained my information from the Library, where a young man who has a broken arm had to climb a ladder to dig out the two Acts. A search party is trying to find the 1771 Act. We should keep debating the Bill until that Act is before us. It would be monstrous if we did not know what the amending legislation was based on.

We wish to know which of the provisions of the 1933 Act will be repealed by the Bill. For instance, the Act contains powers on street works and various subsidiary works. It mentions the underpinning of houses near to street works, the power to divert in various areas and easement, for which councils and planning authorities are normally responsible.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend mentioned street works. Something rather more widespread may be involved in the Bill than appears on the surface—the handing over of obligations under existing legislation to Westminster city council, which will remove burdens from the developer, who can then zoom ahead to better, cleaner and purer profits.

Mr. Barnes: That is possible, but we do not really know. The 1933 Act refers to the extinction of private rights of way over land. As that Act will be swept aside, will the Bill reinstate those provisions, and will responsibilities under the 1933 legislation be taken over by Westminster city council?

Other provisions in the 1933 Act affect different authorities. It refers to the London Electric Supply Corporation Limited and Charing Cross. There are similar measures concerning the Gas, Light and Coke Company. Obviously, there have been vast changes in legislation which have moved some matters into the public sector and others out of the public sector. Specific measures are contained within the 1933 Act which refer to such matters. The 1933 Act refers, for example, to the Commissioner of Police in connection with the Adelphi building. We must consider a wide range of measures affecting arrangements in the area and the Victoria Embankment, yet I have only recently been able to glance at the earlier Acts. Why do we not have a similar Bill now for the Adelphi estate? Why is it such a limited and short document when it is dealing with a wide range of measures?

We have at last received the 1771 Act direct from the cellars of the House of Commons Library. The Bill dates from the reign of George III and it is a substantial document.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it not be preferable to adjourn the House for 10 minutes while my hon. Friend looked at the Act?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) could have looked at the Act earlier today. He knew that this debate was taking place tonight.

Mr. Summerson: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would you kindly ask the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) to treat that aged volume with great respect?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall happily do so. Volumes that are available to the House of Commons should be dealt with very gently. They are very beautiful books. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will see that the book is returned to the Library at the earliest time.

Mr. Barnes: I shall certainly treat the book with great respect, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that the House will treat with great respect this legislation and that contained within other volumes. The House should not pass the Bill in a half-hearted manner and without detailed consideration. This document is important not only as an historic relic, which the Bill seeks to make it, but as a living piece of legislation, which has been amended by the 1933 and 1938 Acts. It is the law at present and will still be the law even if the Bill is given a Second Reading. It will remain the law until other due processes have been gone through. We need to adjourn for some time to study the 1771 Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not lick his fingers again in that way when turning over the pages. He is dealing with very precious volumes.

Mr. Barnes: Apart from having some difficulty in seeing the words, I find that the Act is not written in standard English. It is a creature of the reign of George III. We need to find someone who understands such literature. We need more than merely to collect a copy of this precious document—which I presume is the only such document in the country—from the Vote Office.

Mr. Pike: Would it assist the progress of the House if Westminster city council, the promoters, and other interested parties were to transcribe the 1771 Act into a modern form so that all hon. Members who may debate this important Bill at a later stage can have copies of the document without having to borrow this book and thus risk damaging it?

Mr. Barnes: It really is quite unacceptable that I should have to stand here holding the original in order that I might take part in this debate. Indeed, I am worried about how I should handle it.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be ideal if we had the same procedure as is adopted in dealing with public legislation? When there is a proposal to repeal three Acts of Parliament we should be able to go to the Vote Office and collect the relevant documents. We should

[Mr. Cryer]

be provided with a summary of each clause that is to be repealed. In addition, there should be a translation into modern English of the wording of the 1770 Act. In the ordinary course of events, Members can go to the Vote Office half an hour or an hour before a debate takes place to get the necessary documents.

Mr. Barnes: That is exactly what is required. We should have been provided with copies of the actual legislation. Anything else is an interpretation. An interpretation of the 1777 Act is necessary, but we should have been provided with copies of the other two Acts, which are much more modern. We should also have been provided with documentation relating to the Bill under consideration so that we might relate it to those pieces of legislation.

Bodies seeking to promote legislation in this House should have such an obligation. If procedures such as those to which we are being subjected in respect of this Bill were adopted in respect of public legislation, we should object strongly. Actually, we have a right to object to the form of some of the public Bills that come before us. It is often difficult to get to grips with the wording of clauses and of amendments. However, we at least have an opportunity to examine documents relating to public legislation to get an idea of the nature of its provisions. If there were an opportunity of that kind in cases such as this, Members who intended taking part in a debate could then equip themselves with information. But so could Members who happened to turn up and began to take an interest. All Members, in the course of the debate, would have an opportunity to decide what position to take.

We now have before us—no, I have before me—three Acts. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South is able to examine them because he happens to be sitting beside me. I have had no opportunity to study this precious document, which must be returned to the Library, or the other two Acts. It would be beneficial to adjourn or to move on from this stage without making any decision on Second Reading. That would give us an opportunity to examine these measures in detail. Having done so, we might decide that there was nothing wrong with this Bill, and that there was nothing to worry about. But that is not the point. The point is that, as legislators, we are supposed to scrutinise documents and information carefully. If we do not, we will not be in a position to discharge our duties properly. I should think that our constituents would expect that to be normal procedure in this House.

Mr. Cryer: I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the Adelphi Estate Act 1938, which states:

> "No building shall at any time be erected within the limits of deviation shown on the deposited plans of a greater height than 145·64 feet above Ordnance datum measured to the top of the roof of such building but excluding the chimneys thereof."

Surely those words suggest that that was a very important aesthetic consideration in 1938. It might be regarded as important today, yet the promoters have not explained the importance or relevance of adding two storeys to an existing structure.

Mr. Barnes: When similar measures are before us, the plans associated with them are often available for examination in the Private Bill Office. The matters to which the Bill refers are matters that we should have the opportunity to examine. We should be able to go to the Vote Office to get the basic information and then find specific items elsewhere in the House. If we saw the plans and information and were reminded of the aesthetic considerations at stake, we might decide to move down the embankment——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 1 March.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before we move on, may I ask those hon. Members who have precious volumes belonging to the House to return them to the archives?

European Community (Fraud)

Postponed proceeding on Question, That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1988 and European Community Document No. 4582/90 relating to action against fraud; and approves the Government's efforts to press for value for money from Community expenditure, *resumed*

10 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): If the House had been fuller, I should have been tempted to repeat my 25-minute speech to refresh hon. Members' memories on the important points that I have made to date. Instead, I shall leave hon. Members to read my remarks in *Hansard* and I shall draw my own observations to a close as I see the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has been waiting patiently to speak, as has the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith).

The Court of Auditors names the United Kingdom as one of the member states in which transport infrastructure moneys have merely subsidised projects that would have gone ahead anyway. We reject that accusation. We also think that the court has exceeded its remit in suggesting that the transport infrastructure fund might be treated differently within the budget. While we recognise the valuable work of the court, we believe that it should confine its remarks to the remit that it has been given—namely, to questions of implementation and effectiveness. It is important that Community institutions should concentrate on carrying out their specific functions properly, rather than attempting other tasks outside the scope of their responsibilities.

The Court of Auditors regards the role of the financial controller—covering both formal executive powers on the one hand and powers of inspection, opinion and advice on the other—as ill defined. We agree that it is important to clarify the responsibilities of the financial controller. The new financial regulation—introduced at our instigation—will provide a more precise definition of those responsibilities.

The new financial regulation is another example of Britain's determination to get results in this matter. It sets out the rules for implementing the Community budget. We have succeeded in getting the rules redefined to improve the framework for sounder financial management. In effect, the regulation introduces the basic principle of financial management initiative. The package of changes in the regulation is long overdue.

I must re-emphasise the results of our efforts during the past year. The basis for systematic reporting of frauds in all the main areas of revenue and expenditure has been laid. We shall now have a much better basis for judging whether those member states that report little or no fraud are bastions of lawfulness or havens of maladministration. Numerous control systems have been tightened. For example, under new rules for the post-payment audit of common agricultural policy transactions, the minimum number of checks by member states of the books of major firms and trades will increase by 40 per cent. on average.

We have started to simplify existing rules and regulations to ensure that regimes can be properly policed and audited. For example, last year's report of the Court of Auditors noted that special controls were necessary in respect of meat from adult male cattle. The number of refund categories applying to such meat has been significantly reduced over the past year. We have introduced tighter financial management, the new framework which reflects United Kingdom experience in this area over the past decade. Above all, we have kept fraud at the forefront of the European agenda and have been greatly assisted in that task by the support and encouragement of hon. Members.

10.4 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I open with my perennial complaint about the ability and opportunities of the House properly to scrutinise European Community activities and our Ministers' conduct within the European Community structures. Usually, we have a debate of only one and a half hours, which starts at 10 pm. That was true of the debate some weeks ago on the European Community budget for the forthcoming year.

Today, we have had a variation of that phenomenon. We have had a bifurcated debate. As usual, it was truncated, but it was also split into two parts. It must be unsatisfactory for the Minister's opening speech, which is important in setting the framework for the debate, to be interrupted by three hours of discussion on a private Bill and taken up again at this hour of night. In the near future, we must find a better way to address European Community budgetary issues as the House should address them, and more effectively.

I must confess that the Treasury memoranda issued along with the Community documents are improving somewhat. The memorandum of 4 December 1989 was at least intelligible, if somewhat bland. But attached to it was a completely illegible copy of a Commission document. The presentation of Treasury memoranda still needs to be improved to a certain extent.

We have before us the Court of Auditors report for 1988. The court undertakes a broad and detailed scrutiny of a wide range of Community activities. It considers not only the probity of the use of Community funds—I shall come to that when I concentrate on fraud—but the efficiency with which funds are used. They have some useful insights to offer about the efficiency or otherwise with which Community funds are put to use.

I cite one example—that of industrial support within the regional policy of the Community. The report devotes several pages to industrial support, which is a crucial issue for the United Kingdom economy. As hon. Members will know, the investment performance of the United Kingdom economy during the past 10 years has been far below that of our competitors. It would be useful to consider carefully the way in which European Community funds within the regional policy have been used to support industry in Britain.

I am pleased that the report reveals that the United Kingdom has done a little better than most of the Community countries in the proportion of regional funds that it devotes to industrial support. In Britain, the figure is a bit more that 20 per cent. However, that compares poorly with West Germany, which has consistently exceeded the desired percentage of support—30 per cent.—suggested by the Commission for member countries, because Germany has used 56 per cent. of its regional funds to support its industry. Therefore, although we are

[Mr. Chris Smith]

doing reasonably well in terms of our position on that scale, we are still not achieving either the desired objective or the performance of the best performing economy of the European Community.

It is also instructive to note in the section of the Court of Auditors' report on industrial support that the proportion of projects that were initially agreed for support but subsequently abandoned was 22 per cent. Surely that should give us some pause for thought in wondering whether the initial assessment is being carried out accurately or well enough.

It is also worth noting that the Commission's report highlights the fact that the creation of new enterprise, as opposed to the extension of existing enterprises, forms a small portion of the industrial support coming from European Community funds.

The Court of Auditors' report also draws our attention to the fact that the proportion of goods that are supplied locally within the regions of the United Kingdom, and the proportion of services and sales that are made locally within the regions of the United Kingdom, is poor in relation to the overall support that has been given.

Those are extremely interesting and important issues. The Court of Auditors' report should provide us with much food for thought on issues such as investment in and support for industry in the regions of this country.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does the fact that we keep using the expression "Court of Auditors" grate on the hon. Gentleman as much as it does on me? That is a fraud in itself, because a court has powers to act. It is not a court of auditors at all; it is a bunch of auditors who report to the Commission, all of whom are usually biased in favour of their own nation and so do damn all about it when the report is made, except to shove it under the carpet and to shove out their hands to get some more money with which they will carry out the same fraudulent practices. I wish that we could call it a commission, because that would not be quite as irritating as giving it the name of a "court".

Mr. Smith: I fear that I must advise the hon. Gentleman that "Court of Auditors" is precisely the title under which it goes.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am well aware of that.

Mr. Smith: So, despite the hon. Gentleman's misgivings, we must give it that title when referring to it. The hon. Gentleman does a disservice to the work of the Court of Auditors. The documents that it produces are perhaps not perfect, but they are extremely valuable and give us a considerable insight into the way in which the substantial funds that are available to the European Community are used——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Or misappropriated.

Mr. Smith: Yes—as the hon. Gentleman has just remarked from a sedentary position, or misappropriated.

It is worth bearing in mind that our contribution to the Community budget is £7 billion in a full year and that the overall resources available to the European Community institutions are considerable. In monitoring what happens to that money, the work of the Court of Auditors is both valuable and, on the whole, extremely well carried out.

I shall turn to the reports that we have in front of us that relate to fraud, because that is the issue on which the Minister has concentrated and which is, I suspect, of most immediate interest to the House. It is worth noting—in this respect, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is again being unfair to the Court of Auditors—that action on fraud originated largely because of the comments made by the court in previous reports that it brought forward to Community countries.

It is also noticeable that the principal instances of fraud that are beginning to emerge and be looked at in detail relate especially to the agriculture regime. The Commission on the Fight Against Fraud found that there were no identifiable cases of fraud in relation to the use of regional funds, that cases of fraud in relation to the social fund were confined to one country in the Community, but that cases of fraud in relation to agriculture were more considerable.

The European Community budget is changing gradually—in my view, too gradually—from an over-preponderance of support for agriculture to support for the social and regional funds. That changing balance is to be welcomed and I suspect that one factor that will flow from it is a natural diminution in fraud. However, we must be as rigorous as possible in rooting out fraud as it presently exists. I must confess that, on this, the Government say quite the right things.

In their memorandum of 4 December, the Government say:

"The Government has made clear the high priority which it attached to the fight against fraud and had indicated its readiness to consider any practical and cost-effective measures to this end."

That is absolutely right, and the Minister identified precisely that aim on behalf of the Government.

In their later memorandum of 6 February, the Government restate their objective:

"The Government especially welcomes the fact that legislation has been presented in the two areas highlighted by the Court of Auditors, namely export refunds and intervention storage. Like the Commission, the Government believes that it is extremely important to maintain the political momentum of the fight against fraud; and to foster co-operation at all levels".

Those are exactly the right sentiments, and ones that the Opposition wholeheartedly endorse. We must ask whether the Government have yet done, or are doing, enough to put those sentiments into action.

There is one slight problem, which was touched on earlier in the debate by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr Gill). However efficient we are in looking at individual instances of fraud and particular types of fraud, due to the very nature of the agricultural support system, there will undoubtedly still be a possibility—indeed, a probability—that fraud will continue.

While we must seek to reduce those instances of fraud as much as possible, the principle of intervention tends to make the system capable of fraudulent use. That is one reason why we should continue our efforts to try to change the way in which agricultural support is organised in the European Community.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the nature of some fraud. Perhaps the best publicised example was the case in Leeds of a butcher named Jack Mercer, who was sent to prison in 1986 for a £465,000 meat fraud. He had developed a thriving business sending horse meat to southern Africa and claiming European Community refunds on the basis that it was prime beef.

The exporter was able to claim back in subsidy from the EC the difference between the prices at which he was selling the meat in Third-world countries and the prices at which it would have sold in the Community. Prosecuting counsel in the Mercer case said:

"This was a fraud on the British taxpayer on a very large scale based on a very simple idea. They claimed to export boneless beef when what in fact was being exported ranged from chicken fat and horse meat to meat already rejected as unfit for human consumption. The meat was so poor that it could be shipped out for little more than 25p a box, but it was worth simultaneously a refund of £10 to £15 a box."

That is the sort of fraud we are discussing. It is not just a fraud against the British taxpayer but an insult to the eventual destination of the products which are then purveyed.

Another example is that of British sheep. Britain and France are currently being investigated after it has been identified that there is considerable scope for fraud in the subsidy scheme for sheep, which accounts for about £860 million a year. The payments that are made, of about £15 per animal, are uncheckable.

Farmers, it seems, can easily claim for dead animals or ewes past their prime, rather than for the pregnant ewes for which the money is supposed to be available. The investigation has so far revealed

"a number of frauds of substance",

according to the findings of the Commission on the Fight Against Fraud. That is the sort of activity which the commission is trying to counter. When a Dutch Socialist tabled a question in the European Parliament on the subject, the answer revealed that an estimated 86 million ecu had been lost in refund fraud between 1972 and 1988. We are talking about large sums and particularly nasty instances of fraudulent claiming.

The commission on fraud is extremely worried about what has happened. So, to give them credit, are the British Government, and much of what the Minister said about Her Majesty's Government being in the lead in trying to move forward with the so-called 45-point programme that the commission on fraud has set in train was right.

Praise is due—it is rare for me to offer it—to the British Government for their robust endorsement of the alterations in the documentation required under the change to what is known as the annex 2 documents. The Commission on the Fight Against Fraud was extremely anxious to ensure that much tighter documentation was needed in order to prove that particular products had been exported from one country and imported by another.

The British Government were almost alone in the Community in pushing that issue and in ensuring that, in the end, although the original proposal was, sadly, watered down to a certain extent, better documentation than was previously required was insisted upon. The British Government deserve considerable credit for that. However, a number of questions are outstanding on which I would be grateful for ministerial confirmation.

First, the strength of the anti-fraud co-ordinating unit in Brussels is clearly inadequate for the task with which it is charged. The Minister referred to the fact that it now has 30 members of staff. Is that sufficient? Surely we ought to know by now that well-trained and competent investigators in such anti-fraud units pay for themselves many times over. It would be good to know what commitment the United Kingdom Government have made to improving the effectiveness and increasing the strength of that unit, and what discussions the Government have embarked upon with their fellow member states to ensure that that happens.

Secondly, what specific steps do the Government intend to take to improve cross-border co-operation in the fight against fraud? For example, there is a proposal on the table that draft treaties on extradition and the transfer of criminal proceedings from one EC country to another should be brought forward. Will that happen? Will the Minister give a commitment that the British Government are keen to see such developments? The Select Committee on European Legislation, chaired so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), specifically mentioned that in its report on the commission on fraud documents.

Thirdly, what specific proposals do the Government have for improving the inspection regime for sheep subsidy claims? That is an area where the British regime has been criticised by the commission on fraud, and it clearly needs to be improved.

Fourthly, the Minister brushed aside the Court of Auditors' anxiety about the way in which road and rail projects are financed when Community money is made available in Britain. The most obvious example is that of funds that are available from the EC being deducted from the funds that are available within the United Kingdom. The result, on a number of projects, is that the organisation constructing the project delays claiming the EC money so that it does not lose the British Government money that is available for the project. There is clearly a need to tighten up procedures here, and it would be good if the Government were somewhat less complacent about the criticisms that have been made about the British practice by the Court of Auditors.

Fifthly, the Court of Auditors has drawn attention to the fact that records on fraud are not kept in a uniform way, from one EC country to another. There is not even agreement on what counts as an irregularity within the terms of the Community's provisions. In Britain, we interpret an irregularity as simply and solely a fraud, and it is filed under that heading. In other countries, it is not just fraud but errors that count as irregularities. Would it not be sensible to ensure a common parlance and a common standard throughout the Community? What are the Government doing to achieve that?

I should also like to know what provisions the Government are pressing for to ensure that the proposed bank for reconstruction and development, which is to assist the newly emerging democracies in eastern Europe, will be marked by the same probity that appears to exist in the operation of the regional and social funds in most Community countries. There must be proper scrutiny and proper safeguards in place for the bank similar to those being established for other aspects of the Community's budget.

In summary, the Government have the right aims to ensure that fraud is combated vigorously. The Court of Auditors, the Commission on the Fight Against Fraud and the Government have made a good start on combating

[Mr. Smith]

some of the more obvious and worrying cases of fraud, but there is a long way still to go and a lot still to be done. It would be good if we had further commitments from the Government, straight answers to the questions which we have put to them and a determination to ensure that the fight against fraud is taken further and that fine words issue into sensible and worthwhile actions. A start has been made, but much still needs to be done.

10.31 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): In the debate on the report of the Court of Auditors this time last year the Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), said that fraud was endemic in many states in the European Community. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has pointed out that the United Kingdom is not entirely blameless in this regard.

There is a catalogue of evidence that fraud exists. European Members of Parliament, giving evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee last November, stated that the European Parliament was powerless to stop it. The European Association of Agricultural Law estimated that the cost of fraud was about £3 billion per year, although press reports suggest that it may be between £2 billion and £6 billion per year. There were reports of 1,000 Sicilian livestock breeders being involved with local officials in defrauding the Community of 2 billion lire in subsidies.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of my view that in many instances we are dealing with the effect and not with the cause—that it is the system which is at fault in that it creates a situation in which people are tempted to indulge in fraudulent practices. As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury pointed out, the preponderance of fraud is in agricultural products. I believe that that problem will never be solved because of the commodities which are involved.

We have to ask ourselves how a system of export refunds and intervention payments benefits the consumer. The answer, I suggest, is not at all. How does it benefit the primary producer? Again, I have to say that in my view the answer is, directly, not at all. If consumers actually understood the system, would they support it? I believe that it is very doubtful that they would. So who benefits from a system which allows such fraud? The answer is that only the commodity brokers, the fraudsters and swindlers benefit.

Enough has been said about fraud, so I will deal now with the Court of Auditors report. It is difficult to take exception to the conclusions contained in the report, which makes fascinating reading, and I commend it to people outside the House because they would learn an enormous amount from it.

On page 12 and again on page 49 of the report, the conclusion is that

"it is clear that the Commission's administration and control over own resources needs to be considerably strengthened so that the budgetary authority can have reasonable assurance that the Communities' own resources are properly established, collected and accounted for."

That is an indictment that the House cannot afford to ignore. If we ignore it, there is no point in having a Court of Auditors report. I remind the House of the undertaking given to the House on 14 March 1989 that the United Kingdom Government would follow up the Court of Auditors report.

There is no doubt that the European Community must be brought to book. It deals with a large budget, and from what we read and what we know from previous reports, its accounting systems are poor and leave a great deal to be desired.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Court of Auditors report would be more effective if it was produced sooner than 11 months after the financial year ends? Does it not make it even more difficult to bring the Community to book if it takes 11 months before the report is published and 14 months before the House can consider it?

Mr. Gill: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I am not unaware of his considerable experience in commerce. I was about to invite the House to consider contrasting the report, the scale of the budget and the deficiencies outlined in it with the reaction that there would be in a commercial organisation to receiving such a report from its professional auditors. I suggest that the Government would be failing in their responsibilities if they did not take note of the report, although, as my hon. Friend has said, it is regrettable that we are today considering the report for 1988 rather than for 1989.

We know that the European Community has an almost insatiable appetite for cash, and some hon. Members feel that some of the schemes on which the cash is spent would not pass muster in our national Parliament. Ministers must therefore make better efforts to ensure that we get satisfaction and that the report is not just noted but acted upon.

I am sometimes amazed at the reaction of hon. Members when we talk about European Community expenditure. I agreed with most of what the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said. At one stage, he contrasted the proportion of European regional development fund money spent in Germany on industrial projects with the proportion spent on industrial projects in this country. I invite him to consider whether it would not be better in terms of improving the long-term prospects of the British economy and of British industry if all the funds were spent on infrastructure rather than being allocated to specific industrial concerns. Not only industry but everyone living in this land could benefit from that. Surely increasing emphasis should be placed on projects which benefit every taxpayer in the land, rather than the Government—or the European Community—trying to pick commercial winners.

Mr. Chris Smith: It would indeed be sensible for a substantial amount of Community money to be spent on infrastructure projects. Spain and Portugal, for instance, have spent virtually all their regional fund allocations on such projects. However, so long as it remains the British Goverment's practice to assume that infrastructure money from the Community means a reduction in such money from the Government, such a move would not be entirely good for the overall health of the British economy.

Mr. Gill: I am not sure that I entirely agree. The hon. Gentleman and I perhaps view such matters from different philosophical standpoints.

As I have said several times before, I find two things unacceptable—the cost of Community administration, and the tax churning. We remit our taxes to the Revenue in Whitehall, which in turn remits money to the Community in Brussels, where administration costs are incurred before the money is reallocated to this country. Surely many of the projects currently benefiting from Community money would be better served if we kept the money here in the first place. We are always hearing that this or that project would not have gone ahead without European funds, but where did those funds come from

[Mr. Gill]

originally? The European Community, like our own Government, has no money other than that which it collects from taxpayers.

The report is full of criticism of the administrative and accounting systems and controls in Brussels and calls into question the administration arrangements generally. Surely we could have a perfectly adequate European Community without structural funds. In the context of what is now unfolding in Europe, it might even be preferable. Would not forging links with eastern European countries struggling to establish industries and democracy be easier without such an irksome and complex system of administration?

I believe that we should be fully justified in demanding a root and branch improvement both in the performance and in the probity of the European Commission's financial affairs.

10.44 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to the bifurcated nature of the debate. As for the time available for the debate, it would not have been unreasonable had the debate on the Criminal Justice Bill lasted until 7 o'clock, for private business to fill the three hours between 7 and 10 o'clock and for this debate to start at 10 o'clock and to finish in three-quarters of an hour. Our time will be constrained if every hon. Member who wishes to take part in the debate does so and if we hear a proper reply by 11.30. This year the Government have allowed only one and a half hours for the debate. On 2 March 1989 three hours were made available for it. In terms of a time audit, we have gone backwards.

Money lies at the root of the power of this House. Rightly or wrongly, by means of various Divisions some hon. Members have thought it fit that taxpayers' money should be spent by the European Community. Whether or not that is desirable, all hon. Members agree that that money must be properly audited.

By what means do we exercise control? Ministers can exert influence over the conditions that the Council of Ministers places upon what is called the discharge of the accounts. I shall read into the record article 206B of the treaty of Rome. It says:

"The European Parliament, acting on a recommendation from the Council which shall act by a qualified majority, shall give a discharge to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the budget. To this end, the Council and the European Parliament in turn shall examine the accounts and the financial statement referred to in Article 205A and the annual report by the Court of Auditors together with the replies of the institutions under audit to the observations of the Court of Auditors."

Our aim, therefore, must be to ensure that when the Minister goes to the next meeting of the Council of Ministers he asks it to consider the Court of Auditors report and to make recommendations to the European Parliament, which will then have power to give a discharge. According to my reading of the article, the European Parliament need not discharge the accounts. It would need to be given reasons for not discharging them. If the Council of Ministers, by a qualified majority, gave the European Parliament such a reason, that would be possible. I place that on record because the House still has the power to influence events. However, the key to what happens is the Council of Ministers. I hope that the Minister will be influenced by what we say.

I intend to refer to what happened a year ago and follow up what was said in last year's debate. On that occasion, an amendment was tabled by Her Majesty's Opposition that tried to beef up the Minister's response in the Council of Ministers' meeting on 13 March 1989. The Opposition amendment said:

"and to this end calls on Her Majesty's Government to withhold their approval of any recommendation by the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community to the European Parliament to discharge the annual accounts of the Community for the year 1987, in accordance with the procedures specified in Article 206B of the Treaty of Rome, until the Council has received and discussed the report of the working party established by the Commission of the European Communities to consider the recommendations of the Special Report No. 5 88 of the Court of Auditors (8502 88) dated 13 September 1988 on the management and control of public storage of agricultural products." [*Official Report*, 2 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 464.]

In other words, it asked the Minister not to approve the discharge until a working party had reported. That was a relatively mild amendment, but for reasons that were not made clear in the debate by the then Paymaster General, who we all respect and who is now carrying out a non-party job in Government administration, he resisted that amendment. My hon. Friends pressed it to a Division. I want to follow up what may appear to be verbal gobbledegook but was an extremely important amendment.

That was a debate on the annual Court of Auditors report. Its additional report 8502 88 dated 13 September 1988 on the management and control of public storage of agricultural products was a special report which I christened the Mart report after the president of the Audit board. The Government had every reason to pay attention to that report because during that and preceding debates the former Paymaster General coined the phrase "fraudster friendly". The way in which the accounts were kept, or not kept, invited fraud. We heard a graphic example from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsburgh (Mr. Smith) who referred to the case of the Leeds butcher.

The 1988 report contained plenty of material. I shall re-read one of its findings:

"With regard to the operations financed by the Community resources in which the EIV"

the European Investment Bank—

"is involved to varying extents, the Court is justified in fearing that, due to a lack of watchful action on the part of the Commission, its task as . . . external audit authority will gradually become meaningless if not impossible."

Has that position changed? Has anything happened in the intervening year which would vary that finding of the Audit board last year? If not, all that the Minister said about Commissions and more people has to be qualified.

I now wish to consider the way in which the Community has reacted—or not reacted—to the Mart report. In document 4582/90, the Commission set out at fair length what it has done. I presume that that document was a reaction to the Council meeting of 13 March 1989—the one to which the former Paymaster General hastened after the debate. The document reports on the operation of the new unit—UCLAF—and tells us its aims. It refers to the Council meeting of 13 March and, under the heading,

"Historical context, political background and developments in 1989"

states that UCLAF started with 10 people and has now increased to 30. It continues:

"Fraud prevention was a major topic in 1989. Parliament held a public hearing on the subject in January and continued to show a special interest in fraud prevention activities throughout the year. On 13 April 1989 it adopted a resolution on fraud affecting the Community budget."

It then refers to Council meetings on 25 and 26 May 1989 and the European Council meeting at Madrid in June 1989. That report does not mention the Mart report, which was the subject of an amendment moved by the former Member for Vauxhall. It was subject to much discussion last year, but what has happened since? The audit board's important report drew attention to the fundamental flaws in the system for accounting within the EEC. It was not merely a qualified account year after the year the accounts have been qualified because it produced some recommendations.

Section 6 of the Mart report contained several headings, such as "Quantitative Control", "Qualitative Control", "Flat Rate Basis", "Year End Stock Valuation Methods and Depreciation" and "Conclusion on the Accounts." It said:

"The conclusion that inevitably results from these findings is that it is technically impossible to arrive at any audit opinion whatever, on the view presented by the EAGGF budget accounts, of public storage expenditure."

I do not think that one could find a more qualified report than that.

The Mart report also contained paragraphs entitled "Overall Systems", "Overall Audit Organisation", "Preparation of Monthly Declarations", "Complexity of the Accounting System" and "An Alternative Accounting Method."

I hope that the Minister will say what happened—if he does not know, perhaps he will write to me—to the working party that was supposed to report on the action that will be taken by the Commission on the Mart report. Last year, my hon. Friends suggested that the Government should await its report before giving assent to the discharge of the accounts. The former Paymaster General did not say why that report should not be adopted, but it was not adopted, and there was no mention in the Commission's accounts of activity to prevent fraud. Further, there was no mention of the working party or its conclusions, still less of the Mart report itself. I hope that the Minister will clear up that rather startling omission from the Commission's accounts of its efforts to detect fraud.

10.57 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I want to say a few words about tobacco, but before doing so I must say to the Minister, and I hope that he will at least agree, that it is an insult to Parliament and to our democracy to hold this annual debate after 10 pm, when nobody will notice. It is an outrage that we are discussing the scandals, fraud and spending of the Commission more than a year after the report should have been prepared. That makes it clear that the Government believe that the House is useless and pointless in controlling or making recommendations on the EEC. At some stage, we must say that, with the mass of legislation from the EEC, The total lack of democratic control and the desire, I am afraid, of the Government to ensure that people do not know what is going on, we are not doing a service to democracy.

Like previous reports, this one contains some juicy stories of fraud and scandals. It says that some member states are not paying their contributions, and two are mentioned in particular. We heard the interesting story that development funds are being used in a useless way.

However, the real problem of the report is that it tends to give the impression that something can be done about the scandals that are revealed. I believe that it cannot. There is not much opportunity to probe for a reduction in crime if all the back doors are left open. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has so rightly said, it is pointless to set up new bureaucracies to examine fraud when the basis of fraud is available to every trickster, to every criminal and to every bright person who seeks to find a way of making some money out of it.

What worries me more is that, despite the report, there is a constant conspiracy to try to convince ourselves that problems have been solved. The new unit on fraud is a perfect example. Whenever the issue arises again, we shall be told, "Just wait until the new unit gets to work."

We have heard constant tales in Government reports responding to the auditors' reports about the sad situation of the Common Market tobacco industry. We have heard Ministers say—and it has been put to me—that the Commission showed years ago a welcome determination to tackle the costs of the tobacco regime. I was told that a new agricultural stabiliser had been introduced in the tobacco sector in 1988 and that savings of 9 million ecu had been secured. However, the plain fact is that, despite all the reports, the policies and the scandalous references in the reports of the Court of Auditors over the past six years, production of tobacco in Europe is again at an all-time high. We find that the subsidy of European tobacco is again at an all-time high—£813 million this year or, in European terms, 1,139 million ecu.

In that situation, it is an outrage to common sense that the Common Market is devoting an increased contribution to the "Europe Against Cancer" programme and, at the same time, we are spending over £1 million a week dumping high-tar cigarettes—which we are not permitted to smoke—in Africa, where, no doubt, the people are simply unaware of the specific dangers. There is nothing more shameful and shocking, and which makes us feel more sick than to have such a huge expenditure on producing tobacco, which is the highest subsidised item in the whole common agricultural policy, and to spend a fortune in exporting 149 million tonnes of it at the same time as we are spending a fortune on a massive programme to try to talk about the "Europe Against Cancer" proposals.

Sixty five per cent. of the Common Market harvest, which comes from seven members of the Community, is of the high-tar variety, which will shortly be almost wholly unlawful in the EEC. It is costing us a fortune to promote the growing of tobacco. I can see no point in having the industry at all. I am not alone on these Benches seeing no

I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister, first, that he should give us a commitment that the Government will endeavour to ensure that we can debate these vital matters at a reasonable time so that people can know about them. Secondly, if we want to try to stop fraud, the easy answer is to say no next time the Common Market asks for more

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

cash. Thirdly, does my hon. Friend agree that there is little point in talking about new initiatives and setting up new fraud units when all the evidence shows that despite all the assurances, things go on the same as always?

If we doubt that, we need only look at the current budget for the CAP. Despite the massive programme of the destruction of mountains of food, we find that, this year, £9 billion is being spent on the simple destruction and dumping of food surpluses. It is a scandal, as are many things in the report, but the biggest scandal is to debate the report 14 months late at 11 pm.

11.4 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): My contribution to this debate will be brief, as time is very limited and other hon. Members want to speak.

It is rather sad, especially during a week when the parliamentary burden has been comparatively light and there have been very few votes, that the very important issue of Common Market finance and the Court of Auditors is given such low priority. This is a matter to which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and I have referred on many such occasions. We say — in vain, I know, but it should go on the record as it appears to be the view of all of us — that the House does not appreciate the fact that tens of billions of pounds go astray. But even when money is being spent properly, we are given little time to debate the expenditure.

Let me return to a point that I made in an earlier intervention. The Court of Auditors sets us on the road to fraud because people think that it is a court. It is not a court at all. One is not criticising the work of the auditors when one says that it is not a court. It cannot initiate prosecutions. It reports, I think, to the Council of Ministers. We all know what happens then. Tons of people have their hands and feet in the trough: "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." That applies particularly to Spain, Greece and Italy. It applies to the Irish farmers, who, in their lovely slap-happy Irish way, keep hurling the same cattle and pigs back and forth over the border and collecting money every time they pass go. It must be absolutely splendid for them. I love the Irish, and I think that if peace ever came to Ireland I would have a farm on the border myself. *[Laughter.]* There is a certain humour about this, but it is appalling.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Is my hon. Friend aware that France now has a record grain surplus of 5 million tonnes? That grain is being shipped to Northern Ireland, and £1 a tonne more than market price is being charged, despite the fact that shipping costs £7 or £8 a tonne. What does my hon. Friend think the Court of Auditors will say about that in two or three years' time?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the point that he has made. Of course, those of us who have been aficionados of the Common Market for some years are completely unmoved by such a thing. It is part of the general madness of the system of finance. I am sure that the Court of Auditors will simply open another large bottle from the wine lake to slake their thirst and keep their nerves steady.

The point that I want to make is clear. We are about to enter a period in which more of our money and more of the money of everybody else in the Common Market will go to our friends from east Europe who have discovered freedom late in the day. Happily, of course, it is never too late to be free. The money going to the Poles, the Romanians, the Hungarians and the East Germans will be administered under the sort of ramshackle, wretched, fraudulent system that cannot be contained even in a part of Europe where, for at least 200 years, people have been running things in a reasonably democratic way. Imagine what will happen to the millions of pounds, ecu, or whatever, that will go hurtling into those countries. I prophesy that the Court of Auditors will look upon that as an appalling situation and will say that anything that goes on in western Europe is absolutely marvellous. We may have fraud here, but one thing that people in east Europe have learnt is that fraud comes easy.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: They are well experienced.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: They are well experienced in fraud. They were brought up with it. To survive, poor devils, they had to be.

If we are not careful, 80 per cent. of the money that goes to east Europe will not be put into proper schemes. I hope that we shall tell the Common Market quite clearly that if such things can happen here—I am not criticising the Court of Auditors; just the name— we should have a really strengthened bunch of auditors to make sure that, in the case of east Europe, money goes to the people whom it is intended to help, and is not used to bolster a new kind of bureaucracy and a new kind of financial dictatorship. It has happened in the past and could certainly happen again.

I wish to raise a matter that is a little nearer to home the European development fund. It is most disappointing that the court should have expressed its amazement — its word, not mine — that there has been a reduction in the proportion of the aid from the fund going to industrial projects. In terms of growth, the projects aided have hardly any incentive effect on the economic activity in the region. That is an appalling indictment of the Common Market. The fund was meant to be an engine to power economies and to help deprived regions to get going. If it is not working, let us abandon it and keep the money. We can spend it far more wisely on the purposes for which it is intended. I estimate that we subscribe £300 million or £400 million of our money to the fund. We could do a lot in the north of England and the midlands with that money.

I end as I began. We must concentrate on helping our friends in the emergent new democracies, but we must ensure that the greater proportion of the hundreds of millions of pounds involved ends up where it belongs—on the backs and in the stomachs of those whom we are endeavouring to help—and not in somebody's else's pocket. The Government could do something to ensure that, and I hope that they will.

11.11 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I join the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) in congratulating the Government, who have led the fight against fraud in the European Community. The Commission paid tribute in its report to the degree of political support for the fight against fraud, which it says has produced tangible results. That is due in large part to

the activities of Ministers in the British Parliament and to our debates over the years—however short—drawing attention to fraudulent activities.

We should warmly welcome the fact that we have achieved an increase in the number of auditors and that they now have the power to conduct spot checks of the way in which European funds—in the CAP and in structural funds—are being applied. The increase to 30 auditors is welcome, although that figure is still quite insufficient for the task. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will encourage further moves to enlarge the staff so that we can make certain that member states administer CAP and other European funds properly and that those moneys are properly accounted for. Without such a move, I doubt whether we shall begin to stamp out fraud in many of the European countries that administer European funds—a point to which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred.

Let me take the Minister up on the question of the Treasury function of absorbing European funds into Government programmes and not delineating properly so that the public can see where the money is coming from. That makes for difficulties in auditing the use of European money and means that the people of Britain do not know whether the money is coming from the Treasury or from a European source. That weakens support for the European Community in Britain and may in itself be a fraudulent use by Britain of European funds for programmes decided and agreed in Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) referred to the European development fund. Paragraph 70 on page 195 of the auditors' report contains an alarming statement on the question of its administration:

"There is still no notion of accumulated experience in the development field. Regardless of evaluations of individual past development projects or measures, the lessons learned from this or that type of operation, or in this or that field of activity, should be more clearly brought to the fore, if only in order to emphasize the absolute need for certain commitments, whenever it is clear that failures are due to shortcomings or omissions on the part of the administrations concerned.

The imbalance between the objectives proclaimed throughout the programming process and the results obtained so far, which, all things considered, are modest, is evidence of the difficulty that most ACP countries experience when they try to adopt a genuine development strategy."

It goes on in that vein. We have now voted, or are about to vote, through the new Lomé convention—another £8·5 billion to the European development fund. I submit that the fund's method of administering that money is seriously at fault. When each Lomé agreement is reached, the European development fund goes round the countries establishing what it calls umbrella agreements for each one.

The umbrella agreements set a total budget for a country which must be spent. If it is not spent the officer involved is called to account. That is a wasteful way to use development funds. It will apply in eastern Europe because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak said, the same people will administer the considerable funds being made available to eastern Europe. That is to say that they will not establish what is needed, what funds must be used for particular purposes and whether those purposes can be fulfilled within the economic infrastructure of a country. In agreement with the developing country—presumably with Poland, Czechoslovakia and so on if we do not check this—we shall simply stipulate a certain sum of money to be spent and we shall spend it on anything that the Government of that country wants. That is entirely wrong. We should decide what we shall support, put the money in and then ascertain whether it has been spent properly and the objectives have been achieved. In that way the auditors could check what the EDF is doing with our money. That is an important point which I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take up at the Council of Ministers.

As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, Parliament discharges the report. But what option does it have? It can either discharge it or not discharge it. If it does not discharge it, what will happen? The answer is nothing. The only sanction that we have is under the recent court ruling which stated that, where fraud takes place in a member country, that country has to repay the money to the European Commission. That principle should be established by the European Parliament so that, where it finds that the auditors are right and money has been misspent, the member country must repay it to the Commission.

11.17 pm

Mr. Ryder: I was dismayed to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) contemplating the day when he will become a farmer in Ireland as I had fondly envisaged that when we retired he and I could become VAT inspectors in Palermo or at least agricultural officials in the Peloponnese. I am sure that we would make good VAT inspectors in Palermo.

In the short time that remains, I will do my best to answer the main points raised in the debate. If I am defeated by the clock, I apologise and will write to those hon. Members whose points I have not covered.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for his remarks about the quality of the Treasury memoranda and above all for his praise of what he described as the Government's robust attitude to fraud. I appreciate his words. I am also aware that he would like the Treasury memoranda to be improved even more and I will look into that on his behalf.

The hon. Gentleman tackled several matters and I will comment on as many of them as possible. I am pleased to inform him that a treaty on extradition and transfer of criminal proceedings from this country to another country has been drafted. The implications of the draft are being considered in the light of the judgment in the Greek maize case to which I referred in my opening remarks.

I agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury that controls have not been sufficiently tight in the past, which is precisely why the requirements have been strengthened during the past year and minimum levels of physical examination have been specified. Those improvements are in no small measure due to the efforts that have been made by the Government, by Ministers in all Departments and, above all, by the decisions that have been taken by ECOFIN and by the European Council when it met in Madrid last June.

The report notes that the Court of Auditors is preparing a further separate report on export refunds, and I am pleased about that. When we receive it, we shall see what other specific actions are needed. As I explained in my opening speech, we do not believe for one moment that

[Mr. Ryder]

we have conquered fraud—far from it. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) who I do not think was in his place earlier when I said that, like him, I believe that at present we are seeing only the tip of an iceberg—those are the words that I used—and that that is why the British Government are keener than any other Government in the European Community to get to grips with this serious problem.

I can assure the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury that there is no complacency in our attitude to regional funds. As I said earlier, we believe that the court's criticisms are misplaced. As a result of Community receipts, public expenditure is higher than would otherwise be the case. I will try in a moment to answer the specific point about Community receipts that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells).

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and one other hon. Member expressed concern about the number of staff in the anti-fraud unit in Brussels. Thirty people now work in that unit, so the number has trebled since 2 March last year when we held a similar debate, when there were 10 people working in the unit. However, that is only part of the story because those 30 people represent only a proportion of the total number of staff engaged in anti-fraud activities in the Commission. Specialist staff deal with these matters in each relevant directorate general. The House can be sure that the British Government will continue to press for an effective unit in Brussels to combat fraud—just as we have done in the past year—and we shall also be looking to see whether the directorates general need to be improved so that the staff to whom I have already referred can help with this subject.

I mentioned earlier the improved reporting requirements for the structural funds and own resources. There are two further improvements in train which are relevant to the observations made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. After 18 years of legal and administrative discussions, the Community has finally managed to come up with an agreed definition of "irregularity" for the purpose of reporting. The 1986 Court of Auditors report lamented the absence of such a definition.

The Commission will shortly present an amended version of the main regulation governing reporting requirements in respect of CAP expenditure. We hope that these proposals will contain clear requirements for member states routinely to report cases of fraud and irregularity.

At this stage, I should like to reassure the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on the question of follow-up to the report on intervention. I am advised that the working party that was set up to consider improvements to the intervention system met several times and, as a result of its work, a number of reforms have been agreed which go a long way towards meeting the court's recommendations. These include changes to the system of financing on a flat-rate basis,; improvements in the system of accounting and the introduction of an annual physical check on intervention stocks.

The hon. Member for Newham, South was also concerned that we had given no satisfactory answer to last year's amendment on discharge. Since he made that point I have had a quick glance at last year's debate on the Court of Auditors report. In the first two paragraphs of *Hansard*, my right hon. Friend the then Paymaster General, now the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, dealt with that very question. He said:

> "First, by formally withholding approval of the discharge, we would be admonishing the Commission, because the Commission alone is responsible for implementing the budget and drawing up the accounts. If our motive for withholding approval was to make a broader point about fraud and mismanagement, the impression therefore would be that we were holding the Commission to be largely responsible for such problems. In fact, the responsibility goes much wider." —[*Official Report*, 2 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 456.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) queried the Government's commitment to follow up the last ECOFIN, on 15 March 1989, which dealt with the Court of Auditors report. I think that he was here when we began the debate at 6.30 pm, but I assure him that I was able to outline the ways in which the Government have followed up the debate and the Court of Auditors report last year. We did so not only at ECOFIN on 15 March, but at subsequent ECOFINs, and have continued to do so. Our successful application of pressure to introduce new provisions on sound financial management and accounting into the revised financial regulations has brought about one of the biggest improvements in the past 12 months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East observed that the time provided for this debate was inadequate in view of its importance and significance. I promise to pass on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. I understand that in previous years the debate has taken one and a half hours, and it was only last year that a three-hour slot for the debate could be found by the business managers.

I cannot share the pessimism of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East about the action taken to combat fraud, nor can I share the optimism of those who claim that all is well. That is precisely why the Government will continue to spearhead efforts to get to grips with fraud. In my opening speech, I outlined what we had done and gave an indication of what we proposed to do, not only at ECOFIN in two weeks' time but during the next few months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak talked about the money wasted on structural funds. It is worth remembering that the court's report relates to 1988. Since that report, as he knows, the operation of structural funds has been substantially reformed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford claimed that people do not know where the United Kingdom's EC receipts are going. I refer him to the annual White Paper on public expenditure which gives a detailed breakdown of Community receipts by programme.

As usual, the debate has been lively and well informed. The House has recognised that significant progress has been made in the past 12 months. I do not wish to exaggerate that progress because—here I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East—much more needs to be done, but the Council has now approved the new financial regulation and that is a major advance that we should all welcome. We should be clear, however, that fraud remains a major problem and we certainly cannot afford to relax our efforts.

As I stressed earlier, this debate will help to inform the Government's policy when we go to ECOFIN on 12 March. Our primary purpose at that meeting will be to secure specific conclusions committing the Community to further detailed measures in clearly defined areas. At the March 1989 ECOFIN we identified export refunds and intervention storage and action has been taken in terms of that remit. This year we shall emphasise, among other things, improved reporting, the need for agreement on administrative sanctions and further progress on the simplification of regulations.

I hope that I have reassured the House that the Government take this matter very seriously indeed. By outlining the progress that we have made in the past year, I hope that I have satisfied the House that we are in the vanguard in Europe, and I hope that when we have a similar debate in a year's time I shall be able to report even more progress.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1988 and European Community Document No. 4582/90 relating to action against fraud; and approves the Government's efforts to press for value for money from Community expenditure.

PETITIONS

East London Assessment Study

11.31 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I have the honour to present 10 petitions to the House, all on the subject of the east London assessment study road proposals as they affect my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). These are in addition to the 37 petitions that I presented on Friday morning and in addition also to petitions from the residents of St. Peter's ward, from members of the congregation of the Union chapel and from Mrs. Sherlock, which I deposited in the Bag earlier today.

I have a petition from the residents of Compton terrace, in my constituency, signed by all the residents of Compton terrace, which

Sheweth that the east London assessment study road proposals will be detrimental to our community and environment. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport will give due attention to improving public transport rather than increasing the road capacity which will inevitably be filled by people commuting by car.

Those are sentiments with which I wholeheartedly concur.

There is a petition from citizens concerned with the environment and quality of life in London, drawn from all parts of Islington. They urge that the implementation of the east London assessment study road proposals will be harmful to the environment by attracting increased car traffic into London.

There is a petition from residents of College cross, Witherington road and other parts of Islington showing that the road proposals will harm the environment through noise, pollutants, the division of communities and increases in global warming. They urge the Secretary of State likewise to increase investment in public transport.

There is a petition from the merchants and shoppers of Holloway road. They show that the road proposals will be detrimental to our environment, our communities and our amenities. They urge the Secretary of State to abandon the road-widening schemes.

There is a petition from the residents of Holloway road and surrounding streets. They show that the widening of Holloway road will increase the number of lorries using the road and greatly increase the noise level. They urge the Secretary of State for Transport to abandon the proposal to widen Holloway road and instead to increase investment in public transport.

There is a petition from the parish and community of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Eden grove, in my constituency. It shows that the ELAS road proposals are totally unacceptable and would cause the widespread destruction of homes, businesses and workplaces. It would mean an increase in noise, dirt and pollution. The petitioners fear for the safety of old people, mothers with prams, toddlers and children who attend Our Lady of the Sacred Heart school in Eden grove, who will often have to make the hazardous crossing to attend the school, church and community centre. They too urge the Secretary of State for Transport to abandon the new road schemes.

There is a petition from the residents of Upper Holloway. They show that the ELAS road proposals will

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drastically reduce the value of their properties. They urge the Secretary of State for Transport to abandon the road proposals.

There is a petition from residents of Dunmow walk. They believe that the road proposals will be detrimental to their environment.

There is a petition from residents of Ronalds road. They believe that the proposals will be detrimental to the environment by increasing pollution, traffic congestion and causing destruction to existing communities.

Finally, there is a petition from the staff of the Whittington hospital, Highgate hill. They believe that the ELAS road proposals will greatly increase the transport problems that they will have in getting to and from work. They believe that it will have a disastrous effect on the services that they provide to patients in the local community, and they believe that the proposals will damage the environment in which they work due to increased pollution. They urge the Secretary of State for Transport to drop all the road widening schemes and greatly to improve public transport.

The petitions contain thousands of signatures. They represent part, but only part, of the anger and dismay felt by my constituents at the proposals for major road building which the Secretary of State for Transport is currently considering, and which no one in my constituency wants to see happen.

To lie upon the Table.

11.36 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Last Friday, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) presented 86 petitions to the House, and tonight we are presenting another 20 or so. In total, more than 10,000 people have signed more than 100 petitions opposing the proposals to build major roads through our constituencies and those of our hon. Friends.

Tonight I am presenting to the House 14 petitions with nearly 1,000 signatures and I have also put in the Bag a petition in similar terms from the vicar and parishioners of St. Thomas the Apostle church on St. Thomas's road,near Finsbury park.

The first petition that I wish to present is from the residents of St. George's, Islington, N19 and N7. It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The Humble Petition, of the residents of St. George's Islington, N19 and N7 Sheweth.

That the ELAS Road Proposals will not meet the Department of Transport's stated Objective of improving the Environment. On the contrary, the proposal D2 for the "upgrading" of the Holloway Road will in practice mean the conversion of our local High Street into a massive commuter rat run. The effect of such a drastic increase in speeding traffic, noise and pollution will be to devastate our communities on either side of the road, with continuing blight and loss of local shops and facilities.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport to reject this option D2 and all road-upgrading schemes in London, and concentrate instead on improving public transport services and restraint of commuter traffic in London.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I have a petition from the residents of London, most of whom live in the boroughs that I and my hon. Friend represent, concerning the safety of cyclists and pedestrians who would ordinarily use roads and imploring the Secretary of State for Transport to reject the road-building proposals because of the danger to cyclists, pedestrians and other road users, and instead to increase investment in public transport, to reduce fares and to increase the usage of them.

I have a petition from the residents of 31 Huddleston road and their friends, signed by some 39 people living in a few houses in that area, pointing out that the road proposals will harm their environment and cause road traffic congestion and accidents.

I have a petition from the Boye-Anawomah family who live at 5-7 Marlborough road, Upper Holloway, N.19. It points out that the result would be the ruin of their home and their environment, and the destruction of their local shops and other amenities, and that it would drastically reduce the value of their property and make it unsafe for their children to cross Holloway road. Again it asks that the scheme be dropped.

I have a petition from 24 fathers of children who live in north Islington, pointing out that if large roundabouts between Archway and the Nag's Head shopping area go ahead, the increase in the volume of traffic will pollute the air and increase the level of noise, and endanger their children's physical and mental growth, something that is well documented because of the lead and other forms of air pollution that we suffer from through traffic in our borough.

The residents of Horsell road point out that the building and upgrading of the road will cause increased levels of traffic in the study area generally and on the southern section of the Holloway road in particular, creating an environment increasingly hostile to pedestrians and inhibiting access to shops, public transport and other local services essential to the community. Again they ask for an improvement in public transport as an alternative, and a cheaper and more sensible way of proceeding.

I have a petition signed by only one person, who represents a large number of people, as he is acting chair of the Drayton park neighbourhood forum. There are 24 such forums in the borough which I have the honour to represent. Again he points out that the proposals for a priority route network described in "Traffic in London" and in the east London assessment study will encourage increased levels of car use and will lead to greater congestion in north east London, polluting the environment with noise, noxious emissions and greenhouse gases, and causing harm to the residents. Again, the petition asks the Secretary of State to reject any proposals for the upgrading of the road. That is signed by Mr. Bernstein, who represents a large number of people who are genuinely and deeply concerned.

I have a petition signed by 52 mothers of children who live in north Islington. It points out that the increased volume of traffic will pollute the air and increase the level of noise, and endanger their children's mental and physical growth. It urges the Secretary of State to abandon all road widening schemes put forward.

I have a petition from the Byam Shaw school of art, in Elthorne road, N19, showing that the east London assessment study proposals, in particular the widening of Holloway road, will divide the community and ruin the environment in which the students work and study. Again it urges rejection.

The members of the Tufnell park neighbourhood forum ask for rejection of the proposal. They organised a

public meeting where the hall proved not to be big enough for the 400-odd people who tried to attend to register their concern.

I have a petition from the residents of Archway, showing that the road proposals will be damaging to the homes of people who live in that area. That is signed by 250 people.

I have a petition from the mothers at the Whittington one o'clock club, which is for small children, and the over-60s at Whittington court—an interesting combination. They have come together to point out that the proposal will be harmful to children attending the club and the surrounding park, and they urge rejection of it.

There is a petition from the residents of Holbrooke court in London N7, which overlooks Holloway road and Parkhurst road. It points out that they are opposed to the widening of Archway road and Holloway road because of the destruction of homes, workplaces and churches, and the ruination of the Nag's Head shopping centre. They say that the proposal will increase London's already severe traffic problems.

Finally, I have a petition from the parishioners of St. John's church, London N19, showing that the ELAS road proposal will cause the destruction of the church. A large number of churches along the route will be destroyed, as well as many homes, community centres and jobs.

I hope that the House, in receiving these petitions, will seriously consider the total opposition to major road-building proposals and the awful damage that they will do to the borough that we have the honour to represent.

To lie upon the Table.

Actors (Taxation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.43 pm

Mr. Tom Arnold (Hazel Grove): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the issue of the tax treatment of actors and actresses, because I wish to alert the House to a proposal by the Inland Revenue to treat actors and actresses—particularly newcomers to the profession, about whom I shall have something further to say later—as employed by producers and therefore subject to tax under schedule E of PAYE as from 5 April this year.

I am delighted to see the Financial Secretary to the Treasury here, although he may be somewhat weary at having to contemplate traversing yet again the ground which he covered at the meeting on 25 January with my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), who represents the Society of West End Theatre. I am also pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) in his place because he also represents that society and has shown a keen interest in the theatre for many years.

I must declare an interest, which is in the Register of Members' Interests, and to which I have drawn hon. Members' attention publicly on a number of occasions over the years. Before and indeed after entering the House I was a producer and I have employed many actors and actresses. I do not employ any at the moment, but there is always the possibility that I will at some time in the future, and I am still a member of the Society of West End Theatre.

I am somewhat out of touch, on a day-to-day basis, and I must confess that I was not aware of the latest developments until I was approached by a firm of solicitors, Wright Webb Syrett of 10 Soho square, which has acted for many branches of the theatrical profession over the years. The firm acts for the Personal Managers Association and for numerous stage and film actors, actresses and producers. There is a general feeling that the impact of the proposals will pose a serious threat to the theatrical profession—a profession which I think we all recognise has a tradition second to none, and which contributes enormously to the culture of our nation.

Briefly, stage performers have traditionally been taxed under schedule D, a position endorsed by the High Court in 1921 when Lilian Braithwaite successfully argued that she was assessable under that schedule in respect of profits which she derived from her profession.

In 1972, however, in the case of Fall *v.* Hitchin, a ballet dancer engaged at Sadlers Wells was held to be employed and therefore taxable under schedule E. It seems that the Inland Revenue, on the basis of that somewhat aged case, now proposes to adopt the proposition that all stage personnel should be taxed under schedule E. Let me make it absolutely clear that, so far as I can judge, the Revenue's behaviour has been impeccable. It has listened at length and courteously to all the representations. It has replied, sometimes voluminously, to the various points that have been put to it and it has allowed a great deal of time in which the profession could make arrangements.

However, the Revenue's view is necessarily narrow, and tonight I urge the Government to take a wider view of some of the implications of what is proposed. Equity, the

[Mr. Tom Arnold]

actors' trade union, and the theatres national committee have jointly made representations to the Revenue, so far without success. The Inland Revenue seems determined to proceed with its intention. That is not satisfactory. To start with, actors and actresses have differing circumstances, and the Revenue will be faced with expensive appeals. Those appeals will, as a result of the change, proliferate.

There are a number of other consequences which I believe are serious. The Inland Revenue is saying that newcomers must be taxed under schedule E after 5 April. Theatres in the regions in particular will be greatly affected, because those theatres tend to attract newcomers to the profession and in many cases they already operate under grave financial limitations. All the signs are that the actors and actresses affected by the change will demand higher salaries and that the employers, be they repertory theatres or individual producers, will be asked to bear the costs. To meet that demand they will have to reduce some of the concessions which they offer to their customers at present, and that will be in direct opposition to the policy that they have been urged to follow by the Arts Council. But there is no other way in which they will be able to maximise their revenue to meet the additional costs. There is a real threat that a number of the smaller repertory theatres may have to close as a result of the proposal.

Apart from the huge administrative problems, I believe that great injustices will result from the distinction between allowable expenses under schedule D and those under schedule E. Under schedule E, allowable expenses are those incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of the employment; artistes, however, incur considerable expenses that would not be allowable according to that definition.

Under schedule E, touring and living expenses would have to be borne out of taxed income. That includes the cost of travel to and from venues for rehearsals and performances away from home; self-promotion, including printing and advertisements, photographs, blocks and so forth; the cost of theatre tickets for agents, managers and press; audition expenses, telephone calls, postage and stationery; singing and dancing coaching, including the hiring of rooms; theatre laundry; the cost of repair to wardrobe and props; the cleaning of wardrobe and props; the cost of replacements to wardrobe and props; the cost of renewing wardrobe and props; chiropody for dancers, especially ballet dancers; hairdressing; insurance; and professional fees. That load will be too heavy for most artistes to bear.

I have left until last the most onerous charge of all—one that is causing considerable confusion and has a number of curious features. I understand that henceforth the fee paid by an artist to his agent will also be chargeable against him for tax purposes. That is unfair, and likely to lead to real difficulties: perhaps the Financial Secretary can clarify the position.

In a letter dated 31 July last year, Mr. Peter Lewis, director of the personal tax, division of the Inland Revenue, wrote:

"On agents' fees, it would not be appropriate for the Revenue to advise on the contractual changes needed to ensure that actors assessed under Schedule E do not pay tax on agents' fees. But we thought it might be helpful to you to suggest that you consider whether the present arrangement under which these fees represent a slice of the actor's income which he in turn has to pay over to the agent is the only possible one. While the detail of the relationship between actor and agent is probably unique to your industry, we were conscious that the same problem does not arise in other agency situations such as the temporary agency workers supplied by employment agencies. There the agency obtains its commission direct from the client not through the worker. If similar contractual arrangements were introduced for actors the difficulty with agents' commission you have identified would not arise. It is entirely a matter for the industry to decide whether or not possible changes of this kind should be considered, and if they are possible, whether or not they should be implemented. But we would, of course, be happy to give our views on the tax consequences of any new arrangements you contemplated introducing."

Curiouser and curiouser. The Revenue has shown a remarkable naivety in what appears to be a suggestion that theatre managements should pay agents direct. That cuts across the whole legal concept of agencies. The Revenue makes an analogy with that of employment bureaux, but such bureaux are specifically not permitted by statute to charge the principal—that is, the employee. They can charge only the employer. Section 6 of the Employment Agencies Act 1973 makes such behaviour a criminal offence. We are none the wiser about the Revenue's intentions.

At a meeting on 10 November 1989 the Inland Revenue suggested—I quote from a memorandum of what took place—

"that an application could be made to the IR Board for extra statutory allowances but that if a generous interpretation of the rules concerning allowable expenses under Schedule E was made there might be no need for such an application. The need for consistency of interpretation would be important in such an event."

Does the Inland Revenue expect actors and actresses to pay their agents and then to have to pay tax on those fees? The position is unclear. The Inland Revenue says that it proposes to leave the matter in the hands of tax inspectors. That is unsatisfactory, and I invite the Financial Secretary to comment upon it.

At the meeting on 25 January I understand that the Financial Secretary said that he would let the industry's representatives have the Government's considered view after the Budget. I hope that it is not too late for the Government to think again and to introduce into the Finance Bill a clause that would restore the position to what it was when actors and actresses were taxed under schedule D and allowed to claim various expenses. I strongly believe that, if the proposal is allowed to go ahead in its present form, grave damage will be caused to regional theatre in particular, that there will be a proliferation of appeals and that that will not be the end of the matter.

11.55 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) for allowing me to take part in his Adjournment debate. My hon. Friend's father was a distinguished impresario. When I was young I used to go to the Empire theatre in Newcastle upon Tyne. It was a variety theatre, with once-nightly productions that were invariably "Tom Arnold presents" productions. That was always a sign of class and of a good show.

The theatrical profession is insecure. If one is a Laurence Olivier, or a John Gielgud, or an Alec Guinness, one will have a marvellous time, be at the top of the bill, have one's name above the title of the play and earn a great deal of money. However, there is a higher percentage of unemployment in the theatrical profession than in any

other occupation. The Inland Revenue's proposal that actors and actresses should be taxed under schedule E is causing great concern. Traditionally, they have been taxed under schedule D.

My hon. Friend emphasised that, under schedule E, allowable expenses are those that are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of the employment. Actors and actresses incur considerable expenses that would not be allowable under such a definition. The agent's fee would not be allowable. An actor or actress needs an agent to get a job. I believe that the agent's fee is still 10 per cent. of earnings. Touring and living expenses would not be allowable.

The theatre does not depend just on the west end. We have a thriving provincial theatre. My hon. Friend and I represent constituencies near to Manchester, and we believe that Manchester stages the best theatrical events outside London. Actors and actresses appear there in touring productions and give a great deal of pleasure.

The Equity subscription would not be allowable, either. Unless actors and actresses are Equity members they cannot get a job. Furthermore, there are audition expenses. Auditions are compulsory before anybody is given a part in a production. Then there are telephone calls, postage, stationery and make-up expenses. All those are essential tools of the trade.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary replies to the debate he will say that common sense will prevail and that the Inland Revenue will have a change of heart.

11.59 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) on securing the debate and my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on his contribution. It is often thought that the House consists exclusively of merchant bankers and polytechnic lecturers, but it is valuable that we include hon. Members with the experience of theatrical production of my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove and the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale from the other side of the footlights. I welcome the fact that they have raised this important matter today.

The issue at stake is the standard Equity contract and whether those engaged under it are employed or self-employed. That is essentially a matter of law and not, as some people imagine, a matter of choice. People do not have the right to choose whether they are self-employed or employed. Nor is it a matter of the Revenue making its own judgments. The Revenue simply applies the law as it sees it and as it has been established by the courts. It applies a number of tests.

As my hon. Friend said, the main court case involving the theatrical profession was in 1972. It is a long time since that ruling, which was a clear one but still has not been fully implemented. There was a period of waiting for Equity to appeal, as it was a test case, but eventually in 1975 it chose not to do so. Subsequently, there was a period of negotiation. Instructions were sent out, but I understand that the new treatment was only patchily applied. Subsequently Equity discovered the inconsistencies and there were complaints, further discussions and negotiations. More recently, the final decision has been taken to apply the law, but only gradually and with transitional arrangements. The transitional arrangements mean that those who have an established record of working under contract in the theatrical profession and have been taxed as self-employed will be able to retain that tax status. The new status will apply only to newcomers to the profession who do not have that established record. Over a generation it will come in fully. The Revenue has been endeavouring to establish with Equity those who will be the beneficiaries of the right to remain treated as self-employed.

The Revenue has stated that if Equity wishes to bring in another test case, it would be happy to co-operate to discover whether a different interpretation of the law was possible if Equity believes that the 1972 case is out of date, circumstances have changed or things were not properly considered on that occasion. The Inland Revenue has thus shown a clear willingness to apply the law as flexibly as it is empowered to do and to co-operate as closely as possible with the theatrical profession.

One of the principal issues at stake is that of expenses, as my hon. Friend said, and most particularly the agent's fee. He was right that the Inland Revenue told Equity that it was open to suggestions as to how expenses might be treated in a way which would mean that they had to be paid out of taxed income. The theatre employers and Equity said in November that they were considering the Revenue's suggestions that the present contractual arrangement used be revised. They told the Revenue that they might have some legal difficulty with that—perhaps the legal difficulty to which my hon. Friend referred—but that they were still considering it. They have not yet returned to the Revenue on that, nor suggested what legal difficulties they are examining, but the Revenue remains available to discuss their problems.

The fact that employment agencies are prohibited by law from charging an individual an agency fee does not mean that those who are not forbidden by law are compelled to do otherwise, but there are doubtless people in Equity and the Revenue better placed than I am to discuss such legal matters.

It has been suggested that we should legislate to determine specifically that members of the acting profession be treated as self-employed and not subject to PAYE. Unfortunately, many other groups believe that they are special cases—sometimes for reasons similar to those given by the acting profession and sometimes for reasons unique to their own circumstances. Once one started doing that, one would be on the slippery slope of determining by law where each profession stands on employment and self-employment. It is better to leave it to the general rule and to the case law that has developed as that general rule has been applied.

For national insurance purposes, actors have managed to retain employed status, which is advantageous because, unfortunately, unemployment affects many actors for significant periods. They would not wish to lose that status. I do not think that the issue can be settled by changing the law specifically for the acting profession.

I hope that the discussions between Equity and the Revenue will find some way of softening the treatment of what at present are expenses by recasting them in a way

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

that will comply with the law and will mean that they are not expenses. If it is possible to make progress on that, no one will be happier than I.

I have listened carefully to the comments of both my hon. Friends and I shall reflect further on them when I discuss these matters with the Revenue. I hope that I have done my best to explain how this development occurred and to convince them that we are anxious to be as co-operative as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 28 February 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Mid-Staffordshire, in the room of Bentley John Heddle Esq., deceased — *[Mr. Renton]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Lothian Health Board

1. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Lothian health board; and what was discussed.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I have not had an official meeting with the chairman of Lothian health board recently, but my Department has been in regular contact with the chairman of the board in recent weeks.

Mr. Strang: When will the Secretary of State come clean about the crisis in the Health Service in Lothian? What cuts in the service will have to be made if it is to balance its books by the end of the year? Why has not the Secretary of State published Mr. Cruickshank's report, and when will he admit that the present crisis is a consequence of the Government's failure, year in, year out, to provide money for the additional number of old people and for advances in medical technology?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, Lothian is one of the better-funded health boards in the United Kingdom. If other boards throughout Scotland and south of the border are able to contain their expenditure within their budget, it is obviously reasonable to expect Lothian to do the same.

I should be unhappy about publishing the recent report into Lothian's finances without the agreement of the board itself. At present, we are working on the main priority—trying to find a way of ensuring that the board contains its expenditure within the resources provided for it and without unacceptable consequences for patients, whom the hon. Gentleman and I both want to be protected.

Mr. Eadie: The Secretary of State must know that it has already been established that the health board has been underfunded for many years. Why does he criticise the present board, all of whose members are his nominees? Can he reply specifically to the charge that the extent of the deficit means that there is now a crisis in the Health Service in Midlothian, which will result in hospital closures and cuts in medical staff numbers?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already said that I see no good ground for crisis closures. We all want a proper study to be made of the circumstances that have led to the overspending. We are announcing today a significant increase in the board's cash limit for the current year, to enable it to make any payments that fall due in that year. We now await the board's proposals—arrived at in consultation with the chief executive of the NHS in Scotland—for dealing with the longer-term problems.

Fishing Industry

2. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the current situation in the Scottish fishing industry.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): My right hon. and learned Friend discussed the industry's problems recently with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. The Government will be monitoring the situation closely and will, as always, keep in regular contact with the industry.

Mr. Macdonald: When will the Government act to prevent an increase in fishing activity off the west coast of Scotland as a direct result of limits imposed on east-coast fishing? Does the Minister agree that such an increase is harmful to conservation and to the fragile communities that live on the west coast, and will he undertake to act immediately to stop such encroachments?

Mr. Lang: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but, as he will appreciate, there are certain historic rights of access on the west coast. He will know that we have already taken action: for example, we have proposed that fishermen should radio in when they cross the 4 degree line—a suggestion which came from the fishing industry. We are waiting for a report from our scientists on the position relating to nephrops. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall keep the matter under close review, and give consideration to whatever action is necessary.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Why are the Government so opposed to the introduction of a decommissiong scheme? Would not that be the best safeguard for the future of the industry, and the contribution that it makes to our economy and to the future of the many fishing communities around our coast?

Mr. Lang: I welcome my right hon. Friend back to Scottish questions. He will know that we have considered the matter carefully and that the last time such a scheme was tried, it was not successful. It would be a very costly exercise; it would probably take out the least efficient fishermen and would not be the best way to resolve the problem. However, we are aware of the difficulties and are continuing to keep in close touch with the European Commission on these matters and on how to reduce overfishing.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister recognise that the Scottish fishing industry has been severely hit, not simply because the weather is worse than usual, but because of the new regulations for unemployment benefit? Many of those employed in the Scottish fishing industry do not earn an income as they are not working, and do not get

benefit. Under the new circumstances, will the Minister give further consideration to aiding the Scottish fishing industry?

Mr. Lang: I shall certainly consider what the right hon. Gentleman said. He will be aware that last year the total income of the Scottish industry was only 3 per cent. lower in cash terms than the previous record year, and in previous years the income of the industry rose substantially.

Dr. Godman: With reference to the thoughtful question put by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), why do not the Government show the same sympathy to fishermen as they express when farmers are in trouble? When will the Government introduce a maritime counterpart to the set-aside scheme? Is it not the case that vis-a-vis the multiannual guidance programme obligations, some 200 to 300 fishing vessels will have to be stripped from the Scottish fishing fleet within the next two years? When will the Government play the game by introducing a fair and reasonable decommissioning scheme for the industry?

Mr. Lang: I have already answered the question about a decommissioning scheme. The Government's concern for the fishing industry has become apparent from the close and detailed attention that it has received from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in recent months. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the success of my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend at the Council meeting last December in securing a good deal for this country.

Lothian Health Board

3. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take following the investigation of the finances of Lothian health board by Mr. Don Cruickshank.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Discussions are continuing with Lothian health board.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is not it intolerable that the future of the National Health Service in Lothian should be decided by Mr. Cruickshank and by Peat, Marwick, McLintock behind closed doors? Will the Minister confirm that the value in real terms of the increased allocation for Lothian health board next year is just £8 million, which will be completely swallowed up and wiped out by the repayment of the loan to deal with the present crisis in Lothian health board? Meanwhile we still have a staffing freeze, closures of theatre units and beds and rock bottom morale in the Health Service in Lothian region. Can we have a proper review of the needs of the Health Service in Lothian and will the Minister ensure that the service is funded in accordance with those needs?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman seems to be labouring under a misapprehension. I cannot confirm his figure for the resources for Lothian because it is not correct. The hon. Gentleman talked about the resources available to Lothian health board and took no account of the 1 per cent. that will be available from efficiency savings, to which I know Opposition Members are opposed. As for the Peat, Marwick, McLintock report, the hon. Gentleman should know that decisions about priorities in Lothian health board will be determined by the health board, not by the chief executive, not by the consultants. The chief executive and the consultants are endeavouring to be helpful because the board has spent more than the resources allocated to it, which was discovered at a very late stage in the financial year.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does not the Minister realise that the Secretary of State has appointed a man to preside over the Health Service in Scotland who, when chairman of Wandsworth health authority, presided over the loss of more than 100 beds and a hospital, and ward closures? Those cuts led to no savings, but caused much harm to patient services. Even with the loss of Bruntsfield hospital and Elsie Inglis hospital, the current round of funding leaves Lothian health board with fewer resources than it needs. Its resources do not match medical inflation, and that will result in further ward and hospital closures.

Mr. Forsyth: It is true that the chief executive of the Health Service in Scotland was chairman of Wandsworth health authority. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to acknowledge that the resources available to the Health Service in Scotland are about 25 per cent. higher per head than south of the border. Lothian is the second best funded health board in Scotland. It has benefited from the considerable expansion of services, including phase 1 of St. John's hospital in the constituency of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), which is the biggest single investment project in the Health Service in Scotland. I should have thought that, from time to time, Opposition Members would recognise the strength of the Health Service and help to raise morale instead of constantly pointing to the difficulties that the chief executive and others in the management of the Health Service are attempting to cope with.

Storm Damage

4. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance has been offered to the Highland region following the recent storms and floods.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): On 8 February, my right hon. and learned Friend confirmed that the provisions of the Bellwin scheme would be available to all authorities. We now await reports from them of expenditure that they think likely to qualify for special financial assistance. I can also announce that the Government are satisfied that additional assistance is justified for the repair of elevated flood banks. The rates of grant available under the farm and conservation grant scheme (national), which are normally 50 per cent. for the less-favoured areas and 40 per cent. elsewhere, are being increased to 75 per cent. and 60 per cent. respectively. Those rates will be available for six months from 1 March.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the Minister aware of Highland region's dissatisfaction and concern about the operation of the Bellwin formula, following its experience last year? In particular, will he reconsider the Scottish Office's refusal to offer grant for work on the river bed of the River Ness that is essential for the preservation of Waterloo bridge? Does

he agree that the time limit that he mentioned is unreasonable because it is an arbitrary cut-off point for grant, when essential work may take longer?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's point. In relation to the River Ness, under the Bellwin scheme we allowed as eligible expenditure all the emergency costs of road and transport services up to 31 March 1989, amounting to over £300,000. The Bellwin scheme meets the cost of immediate works, but longer-term repairs should be built into local authorities' budgets. We have provided an additional allocation for water and sewerage of almost £500 million over the next three years.

Mr. Kennedy: May I underscore the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that, based on last year's experience, the Bellwin formula does not take adequate account of the distinctive geographical problems that Highland region is facing? The Minister spoke of enhanced grants for flood banks, which were also announced last year, but will that cover the major expenditure that will be necessary in Fort Augustus, not only to shore up existing flood banks but to instal a completely new flood bank and other flood prevention measures which are now essential following evacuations there for the past two years running?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give a specific reply to the details of the hon. Gentleman's last question, but he was incorrect in the premise on which he based his first question. Aid is given above a threshold which, broadly speaking, is lower, the smaller the population. The amount of financial support also reflects the scale of the immediate emergency work necessary to safeguard life and property, and that may also be lower in heavily populated areas. I agree that updating of the threshold is required, and we hope to make a statement on that to local authorities shortly.

Community Charge

5. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many poll tax payers in Scotland will qualify for transitional relief; and what is the estimated average relief per qualifier for 1990-91.

Mr Rifkind: I expect that about half a million people will be eligible for transitional relief in Scotland. Estimates of average relief for 1990-91 have not been made.

Mr. Ross: Is not the chaotic nature of the poll tax summed up by the fact that this relief was introduced half way into year one of the poll tax in Scotland and the fact that, despite all the right hon. and learned Gentleman's claims for it, only 10 per cent. of poll tax payers will benefit from the relief, at an average rate of 50p a week?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman listened to my answer. I said that it is estimated that half a million people are likely to be entitled to benefit. That is 10 per cent. of the population of Scotland but, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, all those under 18 are not liable for the community charge. A bit of elementary arithmetic would have enabled the hon. Gentleman to work that out for himself.

Mr. Salmond: Has the Secretary of State taken the time to read the speculative article in *The Economist* last week, which suggested that the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Prime Minister will shortly hold a press conference to announce that the poll tax cannot be satisfactorily amended and must be withdrawn and that they apologise to the people for inflicting it on them? Does not a combination of political resistance in Scotland and political panic south of the border mean that the poll tax is now on the rocks?

Mr. Rifkind: *The Economist* is better at analysing the past than predicting the future. Implementation of the community charge in Scotland is being greatly assisted by the valuable co-operation of Scottish National party-controlled Angus district council. As it is the only nationalist-controlled local authority in Scotland, I know that the hon. Gentleman will warmly welcome the fact that it is co-operating in the implementation of the community charge.

Mr. Harris: Has my right hon. and learned Friend been able to glean from the Opposition whether transitional relief will form a part of their cracked scheme for a roof tax? Has he had any representations from the seven members of the Labour party, at least, who are refusing to pay the community charge? Are they equally against the roof tax, as are many Labour party members in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: There is clearly an important distinction between the proposals. Under the Government's proposals, relief is paid to those who are currently paying the charge. I understand that, under the Labour party's roof tax proposals, relief would come to elderly pensioners in respect of their estate only when they died. That is a rather grotesque alternative proposal, which is rightly rejected throughout the Scottish community.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State accept that the difficulty of operating the transitional relief underlines the administrative nightmare that now surrounds the poll tax? Does he recall that the administrative costs for 1988-89 are estimated by his Department at above £31 million and that local authorities have already had to find £10 million to organise the rebate system? Does not the ever-deepening chaos, combined with the essential injustice of the poll tax, press the case for speedy abolition? If the Secretary of State is so concerned about a roof tax and the interests of the home owner, should not he turn his mind to the most damaging roof tax of all—ever-escalating mortgage costs, for which he is responsible?

Mr. Rifkind: The administrative costs of the transitional scheme are being reimbursed to local authorities, as the hon. Gentleman knows. As for his remark about the roof tax, if he does not accept criticisms from Conservative Members or from the rest of Scotland, he might at least listen to the Labour party in Paisley—*[Laughter.]* I am interested in the Opposition's reaction. We have been told that Labour's controversial roof tax plans have been blasted by the Paisley Labour party and that it has told the hon. Gentleman to think again. If the hon. Gentleman will not listen to the rest of Scotland, he might at least listen to those protests from his party, including the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who has given him advice on the matter.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It might be advisable if I were called because those remarks were not——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is still plenty of time.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The mere fact that the hon. Gentleman's constituency has been referred to does not mean that he is automatically called.

Mr. Buchan: It is my constituency and my party——

Mr. Speaker: I know.

Mr. Buchan: —and it was a lie.

Trunk Roads

6. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make a statement on the Government's conclusions following the consultation on primary trunk routes south of Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I hope that the Scottish Office will make a statement soon.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister aware that substantial concern has been expressed in the consultations on the review of primary routes south of Edinburgh, about the inadequate provision for additional dualling on the A1? In my constituency fears have been expressed about the lack of improvements or proposals to increase provision for the A7 south of Hawick. Given the importance of those matters, not only to my constituency and the Borders, but nationally, will the Minister undertake to meet the appropriate hon. Members who are interested in them before he comes to a final conclusion on the review?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. I give an undertaking to the hon. Gentleman that I shall be only to glad to meet him on that subject. We are anxious to reach the most appropriate decision in due course. I understood that he made that request with regard to the A7. I am aware of the joint technical report on the A1, by Northumberland county council, with Lothian and Borders regional councils. We have studied the report and shall certainly take it into account. I am aware of the initiative and interest of the relevant Members of Parliament. We shall take their views fully into account.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind my representations to him about the importance of the A7 from Edinburgh through Hawick to Carlisle? Is he aware of the value of that road to the Borders textiles industry and to tourism? Will he do all that he can to improve that road, particularly south of Hawick, including remedying bad corners and building new bridges?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The matter is under immediate consideration. We have consulted fully on it and we hope to make a statement, as I said earlier.

Mr. McFall: In view of the conclusion of the report by the university of Louvain that poor infrastructure will be responsible for Scotland and, in particular, Strathclyde regional council, coming bottom of the league—along with the Basque country and south Yorkshire—of economic development after 1992, what does the Minister intend to do to remedy that disgraceful position?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, for roads, £4 more per head is spent on each person than in England and Wales. A substantial number of improvements in the infrastructure are planned. We have proposals for motorways throughout Scotland, many of them in the west central belt, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Those proposals will cost £650 million and will go forward.

Transatlantic Flights

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the effects on tourism of permitting transatlantic flights from Edinburgh and Glasgow airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Many of the responses to the Government's consultation paper on Scottish lowland airports policy addressed the possible effects on tourism of an open skies policy. All the points made have been assessed and are being taken fully into account in the review now being concluded.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend accept that the capital city of Scotland should have international gateway status and that Glasgow, as European City of Culture, should also enjoy such status provided that international standards can be met? That does not mean that I have anything against Prestwick. What I resent is Prestwick's monopoly. That is a view shared by the Scottish tourist board.

Mr. Lang: I hear my hon. Friend's views. He will know that over 1,100 submissions on the matter have been made to the Government. They have all been carefully assessed and the Government hope to publish their findings soon.

Mr. David Marshall: Will the Minister come clean and tell the House what was the recommendation of the Secretary of State for Scotland to the Secretary of State for Transport on the review of the Scottish lowland airports policy? Will he be even more honest and tell the House whether the opposition of the Secretary of State for Transport in Cabinet to gateway status for Glasgow and Edinburgh airports is delaying the decision that should have been made months ago and is acting against the best interests of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will have to contain his impatience for a little longer. He may rest assured that when the announcement is made, it will have the unanimous and wholehearted support of the Government.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Has my hon. Friend read the submissions from the Scottish tourist board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board on the benefits to Scottish tourism of an open skies policy? Does he agree with them or not? Has he read the submissions from the Scottish Development Agency and the Scottish Consumer Council? Those organisations have no parochial axe to grind on the economic benefits of giving gateway status to Glasgow. Does he or does he not agree with those submissions?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to identify that important industry, the future of which can affect the future of the Scottish economy. It is estimated that the value of tourism to Scotland was about £420

million last year. Any improvement to that figure as a result of an open skies policy is something of which we would wish to take careful account.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Robert Hughes—question No. 8.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The three hon. Members who were called on the last question were all from one side of the argument. No one—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to bear in mind the fact that I am constantly being urged to speed up Question Time. If I called every hon. Member who had an interest in every question, we should, I judge, get down only to question No. 3. I call Mr. Robert Hughes.

Warrant Sales

8. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will extend the criteria for not pursuing warrant sales for poll tax defaulters to that which applied to rates defaulters before the poll tax came into force.

Mr. Rifkind: The collection of the community charge, including any use of poinding or warrant sales, is a matter for local authorities.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State accept that the paraphernalia and mechanisms of warrant sales should be used as the ultimate and last resort as a method of debt collection and not as the first resort, as seems to be the case with the many authorities applying for sheriff warrants even where there is genuine confusion, genuine error and genuine hardship on the part of people who are late in their poll tax payments? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that there really is absolute discretion for local authorities to deal with each case on its merits so as to avoid the cares, the danger and the hardship facing so many people in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. There is no doubt—I do not think that there is any controversy—that if warrant sales are to be used, they should be used only as the very last resort. Opposition Members should not confuse the issuing of summary warrants with the holding of warrant sales. Many tens of thousands of summary warrants are issued, but in the past that practice has led to only a few warrant sales being necessary. This is a matter for individual local authorities, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman—I am sure that the local authorities also agree—that warrant sales should be used only if all other methods of seeking payment of a legitimate debt have failed to produce results.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I declare an interest, Mr. Speaker, as I am wearing a free pair of trousers in the comrie and strathearn tartan—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am in no position to comment, but carry on.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: This is intended to boost the tourist industry in Scotland. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if the roof tax were introduced, the number of warrant sales under the community charge or the previous rating system would multiply by thousands and ruin the tourist industry in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: There is certainly no doubt that the Labour party's roof tax proposals would hurt pensioners and others on low incomes as they would be expected to pay the same tax as people in comparable properties next door whose incomes might be much higher.

Mr. Canavan: If the Government refuse to grant time for the Bill to abolish warrant sales introduced by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), will the Secretary of State consider tabling an appropriate amendment during the passage of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill which is currently before Parliament? If the Secretary of State is so smart and insolent as to try to ridicule those people who have not paid the poll tax and who are refusing to do so, will he declare his own interest here and now by telling us exactly how many thousands of pounds he will gain annually as a result of the change from rates to poll tax?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not gaining thousands of pounds. The whole premise of the hon. Gentleman's question is false. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much?"] I and the vast majority of people in Scotland are paying our legal taxes. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) is refusing to pay his lawful taxes and, as a result, is adding to the burden on his constituents, who will be obliged to pay the sums that the hon. Gentleman is refusing to pay. If the hon. Gentleman is a man of integrity, he should not expect his constituents to pay his taxes on his behalf—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members not to barrack in that way from a sedentary position. It does not do our reputation any good.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in the case of all taxes of whatever kind which are required to be paid by the individual on demand there is an element that is difficult to collect? That was certainly true of the rates. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree also that the Scottish National Party provost of Perth and Kinross and the Scottish National Party administration of Angus district recognise this and that that is why they are using whatever measures are available to them under the law to collect this tax?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, indeed. Many members of the Scottish National Party are honest, law-abiding citizens. It is unfortunate that their parliamentary representatives in the SNP cannot aspire to such a reputation. Clearly, those representatives do not have the integrity of the many members of their party who are, indeed, obeying the law of the land.

Mr. Maxton: Is it not feeble of the Secretary of State that, when attacking our roof tax proposals, he manages to find just one branch of one Labour constituency in the whole of Scotland to call in aid, whereas, in respect of the poll tax he refuses to listen to the people of Scotland, to his ex-fellow Cabinet Ministers and to fellow tory MPs, who would like to see the tax withdrawn as soon as possible? Why does he not stop the cruel farce of the poinding of goods in Scotland, or at least make some effort to alleviate it by withdrawing now the 20 per cent. minimum payment of the poll tax? Why does he not at the same time make a promise that anybody entitled to a rebate who has not claimed it may do so now and have it backdated to 1 April 1989?

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question, he should be aware that the Paisley

Central branch of the Labour party has attacked his party's roof tax proposals. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was forced to call on the *Financial Times* as the only organ of popular opinion which had so far supported the roof tax. When the Labour party has to call upon the *Financial Times* as its main supporter we know that it is on the run.

Maternity Unit, Elgin

9. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has now received supporting the development of a greenfield site for a specialist maternity unit in Elgin; and if he will make a statement on projected time scales for the announcement of his decision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In addition to representations from the hon. Lady and from the chairman——

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to be patient. *[Interruption.]* Why does not the hon. Gentleman sit down and try again on question No. 10?

Mr. Buchan: Because it is entirely irrelevant.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Well, there will be other opportunities.

Mr. Forsyth: In addition to the representations that I have had from the hon. Lady, I have had representations from the chairman of the local health council, Mrs. Roma Hossack, as well as four letters from other organisations and individuals.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister agree that he has received also 2,000 letters as part of a campaign organised by the Maternity Unit for Moray campaign? An additional 1,000 letters will be sent to him from my office shortly. Does he agree that this indicates the very strong feeling in the constituency that a greenfield site should be developed? Does he recall that, in discussions in Elgin in September 1988, he made it clear that this would be a matter not of debate about finance but of the delivery of good health care in my area? Does he agree that his right hon. and learned Friend said in June 1989 that money would be found? Can he now tell us that money will be found for this development, and may we be told the time scale involved?

Mr. Forsyth: I do not know whether it will come as a shock to the hon. Lady when I tell her that if she examines those letters carefully she will find that they are addressed to her and not to me. I hope that she will reply to each of them individually. Although the letters were not addressed to me, I fully acknowledge the extent of the support that exists for the provision of proper maternity and other services in Moray. The hon. Lady will know that we have received the option appraisal from Grampian health board. I have not yet had an opportunity to study it, but it is being looked at by officials. A hospital on a greenfield site in Elgin would cost around £25 million. It is therefore a major investment proposal. I shall certainly see that it is looked at as speedily as possible. The hon. Lady will appreciate, however, that in view of the scale of the proposal it requires detailed and careful consideration.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that, as well as the letters that he has received, I have also expressed my support for the proposals for the maternity unit at Moray? I know the area welll as I was educated there and I am pleased to support the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), because she has supported me in the campaign for Prestwick. She is aware that security, safety and environmental considerations are also important. Will the junior Minister ensure that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State takes account of that in the lowland airports review?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Lady is as ingenious as the hon. Gentleman in putting her message across, it will no doubt be received with some force.

The question relates to the Moray maternity unit, on which views are held on both sides of the House. The proposal certainly enjoys considerable support in Moray. I was left in no doubt about that when I attended a public meeting with demonstrators outside who said, "Thanks for coming, Mike"—the first time I have ever encountered a demonstration welcoming me to a public meeting in another hon. Member's constituency.

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 11—Sir David Steel—*[Interruption.]* I was thrown by that piece of ingenuity. We now come to question No. 10.

Community Charge

10. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the operation of the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 in relation of the recovery of poll tax arrears.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am satisfied that the powers available to levying authorities in Scotland to collect arrears of community charge are adequate and appropriate for this purpose, as they were for the collection of arrears of domestic rates.

Mr. Douglas: Having regard to the Minister's legal background, does he acknowledge that anyone surveying the poll tax legislation without realising that he would have to resort to the rigours of poinding and warrant sales is too negligent to hold office and that anyone who did know must have little social conscience? Does he accept that the poll tax legislation is designed to intimidate, embarrass and humiliate the poorer sections of our community? There will be a massive demonstration in Glasgow on 31 March. The people of Scotland are surely entitled to use people power to show their repugnance for the legislation and in the regional elections in May to eliminate the Tories and their supporters from every office in the land.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, more than 1 million people in Scotland at present receive rebates. That is extremely important and it is especially designed to help those who are not well off. I should point out to the hon. Gentleman who feels so strongly about this matter—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) should refrain from shouting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Evidently the hon. Gentleman does not want to hear the reply.

The most resented aspects of warrant sales were removed by the 1987 Act—anonymity has been brought

in, certain exemptions have been made to the range of goods affected, and redemption has also been introduced —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is shouting from a sedentary position, but under the community charge virtually everyone makes a contribution to local authority services. It was an absurd system to assume a link between services used and the size of a person's property —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should not address me as though I am James "Buster" Douglas when I am merely the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West trying to answer his question.

The individual in a large house pays the community charge required of him by way of a contribution to local authority services, but he also pays through national taxation. I pay my taxes, but the hon. Gentleman is refusing to do so and is urging his constituents to defy the law. The hon. Gentleman is himself paid by the taxpayer, so that is grossly irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Interjections from a sedentary position lead the Minister to reply to questions which he was not asked when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was on his feet.

Mr. McAllion: The Government's regulations force local authorities to recover poll tax arrears from single people claiming income support who have an income of less than £35 per week. Those claimants are the only group of debtors in Scotland not covered by the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987. Is the Minister proud that the Government have singled out the poorest in society for the most severe poll tax treatment? Does he not understand that although he can make the poor pay the price of the poll tax now, the voters will make him pay the price of the poll tax when he next faces them?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for local authorities to decide what method of collection to use. In many cases it will be arrestment of earnings or of bank accounts. It could be by deduction from income support. It need not necessarily be through poinding, warrant sales or summary warrants.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) would have done better to declare an interest in the question as he is not paying his community charge? Does my hon. Friend also agree that it ill behoves any hon. Member, who has been elected to pass laws, to advocate the breaking of laws which he does not want? It makes a mockery of the whole purpose of democracy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) is rendering a disservice to his constituents, who may end up having to pay extra on their community charge if privileged people such as Members of Parliament who are paid by the taxpayer refuse to pay their own community charge.

Commercial Rating

11. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from those who offer a bed and breakfast service about the effects of the commercial rating of bed and breakfast premises.

Mr. Rifkind: I have had numerous representations mainly from those who run small bed and breakfast establishments in rural areas. As announced yesterday, I intend to bring forward regulations to ensure that small bed and breakfast establishments with six places or fewer, or open for fewer than 100 days per year, should be treated as domestic property and thus not liable for non-domestic rates. I am consulting interested parties on details of the scheme.

Sir David Steel: That answer surely illustrates that nothing concentrates the mind of Ministers more than a question on the Order Paper. I have been in correspondence with the right hon. and learned Gentleman about this since last August, with precious little result, pointing out yet another flaw in the poll tax legislation. It would be churlish of me not to welcome what the Secretary of State has suggested. Releasing from commercial rating bed and breakfast establishments with six beds or fewer will help tourism in rural areas, but will he reconsider the 100-day limit as it makes no sense in areas which provide a modest service all the year round?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful for the welcome that the right hon. Gentleman has given to what I announced. He has made representations on the matter, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and other hon. Gentlemen on both sides.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: And hon. Ladies.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, hon. Members on both sides of the House —hon. Gentlemen and Ladies. The limit of 100 days is intended to distinguish between bed and breakfast establishments that are run essentially as commercial businesses, where non-domestic rates should apply, and bed and breakfast activity that is marginal to the main purpose of the accommodation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that in Pitlochry, and around the highlands of Perthshire and Angus, his decision on establishments with six beds will be welcome? He knows that there has been great concern because of the impact that the legislation could have had. It would have meant the withdrawal of a facility which is essential to the tourist industry in those areas.

Mr. Rifkind: I was very conscious of the problems for the tourist industry in rural areas. That is why we thought it appropriate to make the changes that I have announced. They will be welcomed by the tourist industry and by many tens of thousands of people of modest means who get some additional income through bed and breakfast establishments of the kind indicated.

Mr. Wilson: I am tempted to wonder whether the Secretary of State is serious. How many bed and breakfast establishments does he know of in tourist areas in Scotland which operate for fewer than 100 nights per year? Will he be suggesting to them which nine months of the year they should close? Will he police them with inspectors? Will another aspect of the poll tax be to have inspectors going round to check that bed and breakfast businesses are open for fewer than 100 nights a year? The idea is ridiculous.

Does the Minister accept that the property tax on bed-and-breakfast establishments is another Tory roof tax, as is the standard community charge on second homes? Is not the vast increase in mortgage rates the most

crippling roof tax of all? Is not it Scotland's singular misfortune under his rule to have a Tory poll tax and several Tory roof taxes?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has not done his homework on the first part of his question, or he would know that a very large number of bed-and-breakfast establishments will be exempt from non-domestic rates within the 100-day cut-off period. On the latter part of his remarks, I can only suggest that if he is interested in the welfare of his constituents he should accept that under the Labour party's roof tax proposals not only owner-occupiers, but all council tenants will pay the roof tax. I note that the hon. Gentleman nods. He will appreciate that the council tenants who suffer most will be those living in property recently renovated by local authorities so that the market value of the properties has doubled overnight.

I know that the hon. Gentleman is nervous about the unanimously hostile reaction that the Labour party has received to its roof tax proposals. That is no doubt why it has decided to put off any comparable announcement south of the border. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is considering using Scotland as a guinea pig for the roof tax.

Mr. Andy Stewart: The provision of bed and breakfast in tourist areas is extremely important as it provides quality accommodation at reasonable prices, as is true in my constituency of Sherwood where millions of people come to visit our famous forest. Does my right hon. Friend agree that Labour plans to end derating will bring immediate hardship to those providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation in agricultural areas?

Mr. Rifkind: It is a feature of the Labour party's rural policy that, when it published its Scottish rural policy document last week, it did not highlight the fact that it wishes to end the derating of agricultural land. As my hon. Friend rightly said, that would devastate not only the farming communities but those who depend on the agriculture industry for the well-being of Scotland's rural areas.

British Steel

12. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of British Steel; what issues were discussed; and when he next expects to meet him.

Mr. Rifkind: I last met the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1989 when we discussed matters relevant to the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Sillars: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman actually telling us that despite the crisis that has hit confidence among steelworkers in Lanarkshire, he has made no attempt to hold a meeting with the chairman of British Steel? That is a disgrace. Will he seek an urgent meeting with the chairman and ask why, with a current capital investment programme of £397 million, not a brown penny has been directed to Lanarkshire? Will he also ask how it can be that over the next four years, with 46 rigs to be built for the North sea requiring a new steel demand of 740,000 tonnes, British Steel can continue to place a question mark over the steelworkers in Lanarkshire?

Mr. Rifkind: We have had continuing contact with British Steel since last October. The hon. Gentleman's question related to an actual meeting and I gave him the correct answer. On the more substantial part of his remarks, we all share his hope that British Steel will produce new investment for steel plants in Scotland. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will work closely with those at Ravenscraig rather than distancing themselves from the general view in Scotland that through co-operative efforts the best prospects can be achieved for the future well-being of the steel industry in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman knows that his party is out of kilter with Scottish opinion and that its short-sighted approach has found no favour with the work force at Ravenscraig.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that an immediate decision is pending from British Steel on its plate strategy and especially on the future of the Dalziel plate mill? Is he further aware that the modernisation of that mill is the only fully viable route by which not only the future of platemaking can be pursued economically, but a long-term future secured for other developments at Ravenscraig?

Mr. Rifkind: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's obvious interest in this matter. I agree that the decision in favour of a new plate mill at Dalziel would be of great benefit to the long-term interests of the steel industry in Scotland. We welcome the report produced by Glasgow university last week, which put forward a commercial and not an emotional argument on why there was a good case for that investment in Scotland. We hope that British Steel will scrutinise that report and reach a judgment based on the commercial criteria which can properly be applied to such issues.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), who believes in independence in Europe, that there is a European prohibition on state aid for primary steel making? Will he further confirm that British Steel has made it absolutely clear that in the event of its no longer wishing to operate Ravenscraig it will offer the plant for sale to another buyer?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly true that the European Community forbids any member Government or member state to give taxpayers' support to new investment in primary steel producing. My hon. Friend is also correct that when the industry was privatised British Steel made it clear that if at any time it had no further interest in its assets, particularly at Ravenscraig in Scotland, it would consider an alternative offer for the acquisition of those assets.

Mr. Dewar: The Secretary of State has made it clear that he had a good deal of sympathy with the arguments in Glasgow university's report, which was prepared for the Strathclyde regional council, about the possibility of developing the plate mill at Dalziel. Will he say a little more about how he intends to progress that matter? The Minister of State was reported in the Scottish press on Tuesday as saying that

"he expected to be in contact with BS executives 'in due course'."

Does that mean that Ministers will be personally involved in those meetings? At what level of British Steel does he

expect the meetings to take place? Can he also say something about the time scale because there is a worry that "in due course" may suggest an over-leisurely approach when in fact decisions by British Steel may be imminent. That is a matter of great urgency. I hope that the Secretary of State will be specific about what he intends to do.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand the force of the hon. Gentleman's question. We believe that it is important that British Steel should be aware of the Scottish Office view on these important matters. British Steel's future plate mill strategy is of importance to the Government. I certainly wish to ensure that, well before any decision is reached by British Steel, it has the views not only of the Glasgow university report but of everyone, including the Scottish Office, about the merits of the various options under consideration.

Drug Education

13. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on drug education in schools.

Mr. Lang: Programmes of drug education are undertaken by all education authorities in Scotland. The Scottish Education Department has collaborated in the production of curricular material for schools, and makes a specific grant available for the in-service training of teachers in health education, including education about drugs.

Mr. Rathbone: That is welcome news, but can my hon. Friend reassure the House that particular help will be given to those schools in areas where drug misuse is greatest—for example in the Edinburgh, Leith constituency? Has he been in touch with the organisation called Life Education Centres which does a marvellous job in parts of England but which, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet done anything in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in these matters. Indeed, he is chairman of the all-party drug misuse group. I am aware of the good work done by the organisation to which he referred. There are several organisations in Scotland that take a close interest in these matters, and in the Scottish Office there is the Scottish health education group. We ensure that a number of initiatives are targeted at particular age groups, and packages of materials are made available to all secondary schools in Scotland.

Mr. Ron Brown: Does the Minister accept that drug abuse and addiction are connected with high unemployment? If we look at any place in Scotland and Britain we find that that is the case. Will the Minister come with me to my constituency and visit the group that he mentioned?

Mr. Lang: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's conclusion, relating drug abuse to high unemployment, is right. It is important, however, that we target our campaigns as effectively as possible. As part of that, we are developing teacher in-service training, on which we have spent about £600,000 over the past four years.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware of my correspondence with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland with responsibility for health about the concern of the drugs advisory committee on Grampian health board that the area has not been selected as a priority area for new drug prevention schemes? Although fortunately the area does not face so immediate or great a problem as some other centres of population, does my hon. Friend agree that money spent on prevention before the problem manifests itself is much better than money spent afterwards on treatment?

Mr. Lang: I certainly agree with my right hon. Friend. All education authorities in Scotland have nominated a senior official to co-ordinate these matters. I hope that that is happening effectively in Grampian, as elsewhere. I shall look into the matter.

Community Charge

14. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many extra staff have been employed by regional and island councils in Scotland to deal with the administration and collection of the poll tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No information is held centrally on the number of extra staff employed by local authorities on community charge work.

Mr. McLeish: After the Government's hypocritical and, indeed, near-hysterical response to Labour's alternative, will the Minister accept that the collection of the poll tax in Scotland has involved a scandalous misuse of scarce public resources? Will he concede that Labour's alternative will be simpler, fairer and much cheaper to collect?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The extra cost, as compared with the collection of rates, is £14·5 million, but we consider that justified in terms of greater fairness and accountability. With the roof tax there would be an army of valuers, assessors, monitors and statisticians. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who said in *The Scotsman* that the

> "Labour party policy document on the roof tax must rank high in bidding for the top prize for confusion and obscurantism".

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. First we have an application under Standing Order No. 20.

Storm Damage (Government Assistance)

3.32 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the time limit on Government assistance towards storm damage costs."

The matter is specific, in that it refers to the terms of the Bellwin scheme, under which, after councils have met a certain threshold cost of damage repair, the Government provide 75 per cent. of the further costs. We all know the limitations: many things that we think should be covered are not—for example, the 4 million lost trees. There is no help with replanting trees or with homes that have been engulfed, and pensioners receive no help with rebuilding fences and walls.

Today I am concerned only with the time limits of the scheme. Under the Bellwin scheme, except in north Wales, only work completed by 31 March this year qualifies for Government assistance. Even if the damage took place on 30 March, the repairs would have to be completed by the 31st. Many areas in all parts of the country have suffered from the recent storm chaos. Homes have been engulfed by floods; there has been severe damage to buildings, sea defences and communications. We cannot be sure that we will not face more such damage in the next couple of weeks.

The matter is urgent because councils are already at their wits' end trying to complete January's repairs. Now they have been hit by these most recent storms, when their own direct labour organisations and the independent contractors are already tied up trying to deal with previous remedial work. Councils have only four weeks from Saturday to find contractors, negotiate contracts and complete the work.

It is not possible to comply with their arbitrary deadline. Storms do not tidily occur well before the end of the financial year, so that full cost of uncompleted work could fall on next year's poll tax payers. Councils and victims of the storms need this arbitrary and unrealistic deadline lifted, and we should debate the matter urgently.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the time limit on Government assistance towards storm damage costs."

As the right hon. Member knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what he has said on this matter, but, as he knows, the decision that I have to take is whether to give the matter precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that in this case the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed in today's *Hansard* a written answer by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) in reply to a question from me in relation to possible local income tax rates in Scotland. I received that answer at 7.15 last night, after leaving a Committee. I know that it was not available on the board at 6 o'clock because I took other mail from the board at that time. I have here a news release from the Scottish Conservative party in the name of Mr. Brian Meek, the leader of the Conservative group on Lothian regional council. It starts by saying:

"Commenting on the approximate rates of local income tax released today".

That clearly relates to the question and answer that are in *Hansard* today and which I received at 7.15 last night. The press release is timed just after 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon.

It is quite clear that the Scottish Conservative party and Mr. Brian Meek were given before I got it the information that was meant for me. That is a serious breach of parliamentary etiquette. It is not the way in which Ministers should act.

It also raises the more important constitutional issue of the very worrying relationship between the Scottish Office press department and the Tory party press office in Scotland. While a mistake may have been made on this occasion, it could only have been made if the press office in the Scottisn Office gave special privileges to the Tory party in Scotland that it does not give to any other political party in Scotland or to any organisation there. I should be grateful for any help and guidance that you can give me on this matter, Mr. Speaker.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) is correct in thinking that a mistake was made yesterday. I am glad to repeat to the House the apology that I have already made to the hon. Gentleman. There was a breakdown in communications. It was believed that the written question had been answered and that the information was in the public domain. I therefore very much regret that the written answer did not arrive on the board until 6.45 last night and at the Library at 6.30 pm. I shall take steps to ensure that this mistake is not repeated.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not certain after that apology whether there is much more to be said.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not making something out of nothing. I am grateful to the Under-Secretary of State for his apology. He made it in personal terms which I entirely accept. However, I am genuinely worried about the possible repetition and what is suggested about the methods that are used. It would be in the interests of everyone if we accepted the principle that a written answer is the property of the hon. Member who put down the question until the time that the answer is in his hands. We want an assurance that the Scottish Office

will look closely at its methods and make very sure—cast-iron copper-bottomed sure—that the Scottish Conservative party is not getting the kind of flier that clearly occurred in this case.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I sought yesterday at Question Time to catch your eye on five questions but was unsuccessful. Having listened to your response to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) when he disrupted questions today with points of order, may I take it that, if I had disrupted questions yesterday, you would have given me advice as to the question on which I might be called?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady is being a little too sophisticated. She obviously does not come very often into Scottish questions, during which there is a good deal of chat between both sides of the House.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am glad that the Leader of the House is in his place, because this point concerns the transfer of questions from the Scottish Office to other Departments. It is difficult to understand what is going on. You were kind enough to call my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), who had questions on the Order Paper for answer today. My hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston tabled the following question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many old age pensioners in Scotland"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this not just an extension of Question Time? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Order. I say to the House and to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that I am constantly being urged to speed up the rate of progress in Question Time, and I try to do that, in the interests of those who have questions high on the Order Paper. I cannot possibly expect to get in every hon. Member who wishes to be called.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: The point that I am making, Mr. Speaker, is about the transfer of this question by the Scottish Office to another Department. If I repeat the question to you, I think that you will agree that it is pertinent to the Scottish Office and has nothing to do with any other Department. It was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many old age pensioners in Scotland are liable to pay only 20 per cent. of the poll tax."

That question was transferred. Neither I nor my hon. Friends understand that.

That decision was conveyed to my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston in a letter from somebody called Catherine McGoldrick. That is a highly improper practice. The question was in order and should have been dealt with by the Scottish Office. It is not acceptable for Scottisl. Members to be treated in this way when other questions are being tabled by English Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his say. This is not a matter for me to understand, either. I do not transfer questions—that is a matter for the Ministers concerned. I am not responsible for such things.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding what you said about Scottish Question Time, because of the numerous points of order from Opposition Members, we reached only question No. 14, which is unfair for those in the first 25. Will you make it clear to the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, that all points of order will be taken after questions, not during them?

Mr. Speaker: Points of order are taken at the correct time, which is after applications under Standing Order No. 20. Points of order arising during Question Time must be taken then if they need my immediate attention. I am sure that the House will accept however that, in a way, they are self-policing.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to reflect further on the inevitable difficulties caused to our procedures if, as is the case, a junior Minister in the Scottish Office is also chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland, because he is covering the same geographical area. In those circumstances, what confidence can hon. Members have that other political parties in Scotland are being treated equitably with the Conservative party by the Scottish Office?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This relates to written questions. An interesting suggestion was made—that written questions should be the property of the hon. Member who has tabled the question until such time as that hon. Member has possession of the question. You will be aware that hon. Members often do not pick up written questions until late in the day, and that questions are also supplied to the media. Therefore, before making a decision on that suggestion one must recognise that that system would not work because of the way that this place operates, and consequently that is a request which cannot be honoured.

Mr. Speaker: The point that was raised was about the availability of the question—that the question should have been available at 3.30.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are aware that I would not raise a point of order with you unless it arose out of a serious intervention, as was the case at Question Time. It was suggested that I had an interest to declare. Normally I would have brushed that aside, but in view of the strictures levelled by a senior Committee of the House on the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and the fact that our proceedings, especially at Question Time, are well televised and noted by the electors of Scotland, I wish wholeheartedly to declare my interest, which is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not necessary for interests to be declared during Question Time.

Mr. Douglas: My integrity was impugned by a Conservative Member. I am happy to declare that I am withholding payment of the poll tax, as is Mrs. Douglas. We are doing so in the interests of standing beside those who cannot pay.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What I say to the hon. Member—I say it to the whole House—is that if we have supplementary questions from a sedentary position, Ministers tend to answer them, and that delays our proceedings.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Question Time, the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) raised the question of the treatment of defaulters under the community charge. He is a well publicised defaulter. Should he not have declared his interest?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order for me.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 16 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Timothy Raison
Mr. William Hague
Mr. Phillip Oppenheim.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 9903/89 on accounts of insurance undertakings be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Security Service Act 1989 (Amendment)

3.47 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Security Service Act 1989 to provide that a complaint may be made to the Security Service Tribunal in respect of the actions of the Service whether or not the complainant has been the subject of inquiries by the Service; to widen the orders of reference of the Tribunal to include investigation of complaints about any activity of the Service, provided that the Tribunal shall be satisfied that such complaints are neither frivolous nor vexatious; to require that reports on certain categories of investigation shall be laid before Parliament; to give Members of Parliament a right of access to the Tribunal in matters directly affecting them or their constituents; and for connected purposes.

The long preamble to the Bill represents an honest, serious stab at lessening the chances of the recurrence in future of what generically we can call the Colin Wallace affair. In plain language, an enhanced social service tribunal might act as some deterrent to the kind of thing that happened to the Wilson and Heath Governments in the 1970s—set out by Wilson in his evidence to the Royal Commission on the press in May 1977—happening to a Kinnock or, for that matter, to a Baker, a Patten or a Heseltine Government in the 1990s.

I have never indulged in blanket criticism of the security services. The late Sir Maurice Oldfield and others have been friends but, equally, prima facie it seems that elements of the security services have run amok. The proposal in my Bill is about making all elements of the security services accountable.

The tribunal route to accountability has its attractions. The tribunal is a filter. It can refuse to countenance the frivolous or vexatious. Equally, when confronted by a book such as Paul Foot's "Who Framed Colin Wallace?"—or, in my opinion, Captain Fred Holroyd's "War Without Honour"—the tribunal would surely say, "It is our job to look at this stuff properly." The cases should not be time-limited; the tribunal should be able to investigate as far back as it deems necessary.

The tribunal is already in existence, so I am not suggesting setting up some expensive new apparatus. Its members are men and women with the necessary familiarity with the security services and their modus operandi. Lord Justice Sir Murray Stuart-Smith, Mr. Justice Simon Brown, Sir Richard Gaskell, last year's president of the Law Society, and Sheriff John McInnes are all familiar with security matters. In the Wallace case, a tribunal should call Sir Percy Craddock, chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and Sir Christopher Curwen, security co-ordinator, to ask the reasons for their advice. It should also call Mr. Dennis Payne.

The tribunal members are presumably considered sufficiently reliable to handle delicate and highly classified information. Assuming—and it is a whopper of an assumption—that the House of Commons really wants to find out the truth of what occurred in the Wallace affair, I am not enchanted by the alternatives. You yourself judge, Mr. Speaker—rightly, in my view—that the Privileges Committee is not a suitable body to conduct an investigation of what happened a quarter of a century ago and 15 years ago, and the subsequent concealment.

Should any hon. Member be interested, I can explain further—from personal experience of being hauled before the Privileges Committee and questioned by the late

Duncan Sandys, Elwyn Jones and others—why the Privileges Committee should not become involved in a Wallace-type affair. I can also explain from personal experience, having given evidence before the Franks committee for one hour and 55 minutes, why I do not believe that such a committee—the committee considering the Falklands consisted of the Lords Barber, Lever and Watkinson, Sir Patrick Nairne and my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)—is the ideal set-up.

At one time, I supposed that the Security Commission was a good vehicle for an investigation, but a friendly letter from its distinguished chairman and Law Lord, Lord Griffiths of Govilon, made it clear that he could act only on a reference from the Prime Minister. The House can judge how likely it is that that would be forthcoming. As for the type of inquiry held under David Calcutt QC, I heard the master of Magdalene college, Cambridge, say on the radio that he would stick precisely to his terms of reference, and that only the decision of Parliament could widen its scope.

Nor am I happy about the investigation by the Select Committee on Defence. Select Committees have many virtues, but politicians who want to keep their political noses clean with colleagues—of any and every party—are not the most impartial of investigative inquiry practitioners when the political chips may come down. None of us who heard it in the Committee Room will quickly forget the supercilious stonewalling of Sir Leon Brittan when he was asked direct questions by members of the Defence Select Committee.

As for parliamentary questions, whether on account of the Osmotherly rules or plain bloody-minded obstruction, the cat-and-mouse saga on Wallace suffered over the past three years by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and myself is a disgrace to parliamentary democracy. All we ask for are some truthful and candid answers, but the resolution of the issue by means of parliamentary questions is about as likely as a quick solution to Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce.

Let me give some examples of the advantages that a tribunal would have. Were Army intelligence services and MI5 really unaware of homosexual abuses at the Kincora boys home before 1980? Did General Leng order his intelligence staff to alert the police as early as 1974, after they had shown him a dossier naming the men and boys involved, and, if so, what happened? Those are some questions that the tribunal could ask; I share the widely reported distaste of Sir Michael Quinlan at the fact that nothing was done.

The tribunal could ask whether Colin Wallace's document of 8 November 1974 was a forgery, as suggested by the Hughes report. I understand that Judge Hughes is very embarrassed about that. It could also ask whether the Prime Minister's office is vulnerable to burglary, which is not a trivial question. On 24 July last year I asked the right hon. Lady:

"how many documents were received in relation to Colin Wallace and sent by or on behalf of Colin Wallace to No. 10 Downing street for onward transmission to the Hughes inquiry into the Kincora boys' home; how many were sent on to Judge Hughes; and what are the reasons for the difference between the two figures."

The Prime Minister replied:

"A file of papers relating to Mr. Colin Wallace was submitted to my office on 1 November 1984, but was returned to the sender on 24 November. No complete record of the documents was retained. No question arose at that stage of the papers being intended for onward transmission to the Hughes inquiry. When it was subsequently requested that the papers should be sent to the inquiry, such documents as had been copied and retained were duly made available."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1989, Vol. 157, c. 439.]

The tribunal should be empowered to examine such questions as whether that short answer contains three grave errors of fact.

First, in his letter of 30 January to the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), the Minister of State for the Armed Forces conceded that the Ministry of Defence "have no reason" to doubt that Mr. Wallace's assertions that the file was not returned to him and that a copy of the file was returned. I do not want to get thrown out for bad parliamentary language, but if I were to say the category that that would come under, I should be suspended for five days.

Secondly, that means that the original was retained, so a complete record of the document was retained. A similar comment applies to that.

Thirdly, we now hear from several Ministers that no documents of any importance were made available to the Hughes inquiry. Indeed, Judge Hughes made it clear that he did not see any documents from the Prime Minister's office.

What happened to the originals of those documents? The Minister of State for the Armed Forces said that no explanation has come to light. Governments really ought not to lose documents of that sensitivity. A tribunal such as I suggest could examine whether the files were stolen from No. 10 Downing street; and if so, by whom and for what reason. The copy which was returned to Mr. Wallace's friend, Mr. Holroyd, was passed to his Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The hon. Gentleman subsequently reported to the police that the file has gone missing after being locked up in his House of Commons office. It reappeared mysteriously several days later, 30 miles away in the hon. Gentleman's constituency office.

All those matters should be looked at. When Monday's issue of *The Times* reported that the Cabinet Office is solemnly engaged in an examination of the bizarre allegation that MI5 has been using premium bond cheques, supposedly issued by ERNIE for paying freelance agents, it is really high time that the House of Commons did something.

My proposal is sensible, cautious and practical. An honest tribunal of distinguished people and capable lawyers should be able to look at the Wallace case, the Holroyd case and, if necessary, the extraordinary business of ERNIE paying out money—as printed on page 2 of *The Times*, which is supposedly a major paper of record—and to find out what is going on in this country. My proposal for a tribunal is democratic; it is not unduly expensive, it is practical and effective.

Question put and agreed to.

Security Service Act 1989 (Amendment)

Mr. Tam Dalyell, supported by Mr. Norman Buchan, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Kevin McNamara, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. Robert N. Wareing, presented a Bill to amend the Security Service Act 1989 to provide that a complaint may be made to the Security Service Tribunal in respect of the actions of the Service

whether or not the complainant has been the subject of inquiries by the Service; to widen the orders of reference of the Tribunal to include investigation of complaints about any activity of the Service, provided that the Tribunal shall be satisfied that such complaints are neither frivolous nor vexatious; to require that reports on certain categories of investigation shall be laid before Parliament; to give Members of Parliament a right of access to the Tribunal in matters directly affecting them or their constituents; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 April and to be printed. [Bill 86.]

Royal Air Force

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

3.58 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): Nineteen-ninety is the year of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Throughout the year, in different parts of the nation, there will be formal commemorations of those events of 1940, culminating in a major parade and fly-past over London in September. In these circumstances it is a particular privilege to be able to make my own tribute to the courage, determination and skills of the Royal Air Force, past and present and the House will carry that anniversary in the forefront of its mind during our debate this afternoon.

I suggest two reasons in particular. The first is the uncertainties in the international situation. For the first time in that period—indeed for longer, because it was clear from the time of the Munich crisis who our enemies were and where the battles would be fought—the familiar certainties of a clearly identified threat, a traditional confrontation, appear to have diminished.

The policies that the West has collectively pursued, and the international institutions that we have developed, have guaranteed us peace and security and freedom and prosperity. The people of eastern Europe now want to share our success. The challenge facing the West is how to accommodate their aspirations without jeopardising our own achievements and, above all, our security.

While the apparatus of Communism and of the Warsaw pact is disintegrating, we retain firm foundations on which to build. We have robust and healthy institutions—the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, the Western European Union and the European Community—within which we can co-ordinate our work towards a stable and lasting security order in Europe.

Political and military changes must go hand in hand. The current negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe are of particular importance. They are an indication of the good faith of the East in reducing its overwhelming superiority in conventional armaments, and a CFE agreement will be a major step towards the new order that we are seeking.

The second reason is even more relevant. As everyone knows, the battle of Britain was a very close-run thing. There were two points when the attrition rate of aircraft and skilled aircrew was such that our survival—and thus the survival of western democracy as a whole—was in jeopardy. That crisis can be directly linked to the neglect—founded in optimism, in parsimony and in political cowardice, for some of which the House of Commons cannot escape blame—of the early 1930s. [HON. MEMBERS: "It was a Tory Government!"] Certainly; I do not deny that. With that recollection in our minds, I am sure that the House would agree that we must—with the Royal Air Force of all the services—guard against a repetition of those mistakes.

I propose to refer, first, to the operational achievements of the RAF in the past year, then to discuss the procurement aspect for the future, and finally to touch on certain personnel matters.

The Royal Air Force continues to play a full part in the United Kingdom's military commitments outside the

NATO area, with forces stationed in Belize, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands and Hong Kong. Aircraft of the air transport forces maintain regular support to those garrisons.

In addition to those continuing commitments, Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft have deployed to Oman on a series of training exercises with the Sultan of Oman's armed forces.

In March last year, the United Kingdom was asked by the United Nations, at very short notice, to send personnel to Namibia. A six-man air operations team was dispatched, and, for the first three months of its deployment, it helped oversee the arrival of military and civil aircraft bringing in the various national contingents and their equipment and supplies.

This year, Royal Air Force aircraft will again be deploying to the far east to take part in a major exercise under the five-power defence arrangements. Those arrangements bring United Kingdom forces together with those of Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. Royal Air Force participation will include Tornado F3 and GR1 aircraft, together with tanker support, and underlines our continued commitment to the arrangements and the importance that we attach to the area.

In addition, the RAF has played a significant role in disaster relief. Following the passage of hurricane Hugo through the eastern Caribbean, it was involved in the provision of urgent assistance to a number of the Leeward Islands which had suffered damage. RAF Hercules shuttled over 49,000 lbs of freight and 400 passengers from Antigua to Montserrat and St. Kitts. In addition, those aircraft carried personnel of the Bermuda defence force to the British Virgin Islands to assist in the restoration of essential services there.

The Royal Air Force has also taken part in relief work in the United Kingdom following the January gales. RAF Hercules performed the particularly valuable task of carrying electricity-generating equipment to parts of the country left without power. Since Monday, when a sea wall was breached at Towyn, north Wales, four RAF search and rescue helicopters have airlifted 75 people from the town. RAF mountain rescue teams have also joined the police in helping more than 500 people to safety.

The RAF continues to play a vital role in more traditional search and rescue operations at home and abroad. In 1989, some 900 people were rescued in the United Kingdom alone. Some hon. Members, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller)—who is not in his place—have expressed concern at the recent redeployment of military SAR assets. As we expected, coverage over the country as a whole, particularly at night and in bad weather, has been improved. I am glad that these misgivings have proved unfounded.

The House will wish to congratulate the RAF on its achievements over the past weekend in going to the aid of injured passengers aboard the stricken Cypriot ferry the Baroness M. Following a call from the ship to the Cyprus marine radio station, the RAF rescue co-ordination centre in Cyprus scrambled three Wessex helicopters of No. 84 squadron and a visiting Nimrod from No. 201 squadron. Fifteen casualties were winched from the ship and taken to Larnaca international airport for onward transport to hospital.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Can my hon. Friend confirm whether the RAF has been able to establish the nationality of the gunboat that attacked this unarmed ferry on the high seas? Obviously that information would be of some interest to the House, not least from the point of view of the safety of other shipping in the area.

Mr. Clark: My understanding is that the gunboat carried Syrian markings.

The year 1989 was a special one for the Red Arrows. It was the team's silver jubilee year and it culminated in an open day air show, held in October at Scampton. Royal Air Force aircraft and display teams from France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, as well as the Red Arrows, displayed their skills to an enthusiastic crowd, some of whom had come especially for the event from distant parts of the world. On those occasions when it is possible to send the Red Arrows abroad, they act as a marvellous demonstration of the quality of British aircraft as well as the excellence of the pilots who fly them. Such displays have a wider role to play in enhancing British prestige and trading prospects in those places.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman has outlined a background of a diminution in international tension. Would it not be ironic if that resulted in an increase in low-flying sorties over rural areas as many of these aircraft are relocated from German air space to United Kingdom air space? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the present level of low flying in the rural areas of Scotland is unacceptable as it is, and that any increase in Scotland is out of the question?

Mr. Clark: I am well aware that low flying is a matter of great concern to a number of hon. Members, especially those whose constituencies are directly affected. I propose to touch on that matter. If the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied with my comments, I shall refer to it again, if the House grants me leave.

The House will be aware of the importance that we attach to the safety of all display flying. Last year, we completed a comprehensive review of military flying regulations aimed at ensuring that the RAF would continue to entertain the public as safely and professionally as possible. None the less, every year tragically sees a number of major accidents involving RAF aircraft, in some of which some service men are killed.

As the House well knows, every accident is exhaustively investigated, and we make every effort to ensure that the lessons learned minimise the risk of recurrence. There is no accident level that we regard as acceptable; we are always striving to make military flying safer. But we also have to ensure that our aircrew receive the experience and training that they need to perform their operational roles. Well-trained, experienced pilots are an essential element in enhancing flight safety.

I am sure that the House will be pleased to learn that 1989 was an exceptionally safe year for the RAF in terms of both the absolute number of major aircraft accidents and the more significant measure of the major accident rate per 10,000 flying hours—0·31. This confirms the long-term trend in major RAF accidents, which has been downwards for many years.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Before my hon. Friend leaves the matter of safety, will he comment on the conclusions of his review? Does he agree, that it is

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

dangerous for aircraft to carry out tight turns over crowded areas, and that such turns can better be carried out over runways?

Mr. Clark: If the crews are properly trained and fly at the highest levels of skill and competence, as we believe they do, it does not make any difference whether a tight turn is carried out over open country or an urban area. There is nothing inherently dangerous about a tight turn, providing that the proper procedures and skills are deployed. I am confident that they always would be deployed.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am amazed at the Minister's answer to his hon. Friend. I understood that the RAF had issued instructions to its display teams that they should not do tight turns over crowded areas and that the RAF recognised the danger of such operations where there is a likelihood, as in Ramstein in Germany, that a plane could plough into the crowds and kill. Would he check on that? I thought that the RAF had issued such an order.

Mr. Clark: Aircraft do not plough into crowds simply because they are making a tight turn. Several factors are involved in a failure of a catastrophic nature such as the hon. Gentleman cited. Every accident is subject to a full inquiry and has different characteristics, although we deplore all accidents.

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State met the newly formed all-party group on low flying last autumn. The Public Accounts Committee last week considered a report from the Comptroller and Auditor General. My Department has co-operated fully with the extensive inquiry conducted by the Select Committee on Defence. We await the outcome of these investigations and will certainly give them the most careful consideration.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Clark: I should prefer it if the hon. Member developed his arguments in the course of his own speech, if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Clark: I have concluded my survey of operational matters and I should prefer to move on to the procurement aspect. I shall listen carefully to what the hon. Gentleman says if he proposes to remain for the rest of the debate.

As the House knows, the RAF has several major programmes of equipment modernisation under way.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a real point of order?

Mr. Salmond: The Minister said earlier when he did not reply to my intervention that he would make some substantive comments on low flying. His remarks were so insubstantial that many hon. Members may have missed them.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. It may be a point of frustration.

Mr. Clark: I explained that the Department has been co-operating fully with an extensive inquiry. When the outcome of those investigations is to hand, we shall give it our consideration and a further statement will be made.

On 23 January, in reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), I made a series of points on the European fighter aircraft—in particular the selection of the radar. I should like to reinforce what I said then and, in particular, reaffirm our whole-hearted commitment to the project.

An effective air defence is essential for the security of the United Kingdom. The EFA will be, in the late 1990s and, beyond, the leading air defence fighter of its generation. Work on the prototype aircraft is proceeding well, as is the development of the engine and the selection of equipments. The key to EFA is its ability to detect, track, identify and attack hostile aircraft. The radar must meet all our specifications, however exacting. Continuing and fruitful discussions on this subject between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his German counterpart last month give me confidence that a decision is near to hand.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Clark: I shall complete my remarks on this subject before I give way.

I share the concern of many that the Ferranti Defence Systems' ECR90 radar should receive the recognition that it deserves. To this end, the anticipated acquisition of FDS by GEC should dispel any reservations our partners may have had concerning Ferranti's financial viability. In doing so, the competing bids will be considered on their respective merits.

To bring about this restructuring in so short a time was a remarkable achievement well illustrating the flexibility and the capacity for long-term strategic thinking by British industry. This has been widely welcomed by hon. Members representing the constituents concerned.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On the question of Ferranti, is not it outrageous that Sir Derek Alun-Jones, the chairman of Ferranti, should receive something like £0·5 million—I believe that it is £497,000—in a golden handshake when the track record of that company over the past 12 months is appalling, especially in relation to the company's acquisitions? Is not it the taxpayer who ultimately picks up the bill for this, because the taxpayer is Ferranti's primary customer?

Mr. Clark: The extent to which Ferranti shareholders, who have seen the value of their investment decline by over two thirds in the past year, share this view is for others to judge.

The only sour note in this affair was struck by the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) who searched desperately round, to the considerable embarrassment—I suspect—of some of his Scottish colleagues for grounds on which to oppose and criticise. The actual phrase he used was "dirty dealing", and he did his best to spread alarm and despondency with various accusations, all of them shown to be quite groundless. I shall look forward to his comments, if he feels inclined to make any, on how he sees the present situation——

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I said that at the time, when I felt that it was justified in the sense that the disclosures trickled out and there was a lot of anxiety and many legitimate questions that had to be answered. In the main, those questions have been answered in the discussions and meetings that we have had with Mr. Dunn of Ferranti and with Lord Weinstock.

I and others have been unreserved in our satisfaction at the outcome of that extremely worrying period which, given the Minister of State's characteristically languid approach to these matters, filled us with great alarm at the time. We now recognise that, in difficult circumstances, this is probably the best possible deal that could have been achieved. We have had assurances from Lord Weinstock, to which we shall seek to keep him, and we are happy to have that opportunity.

Mr. Clark: I am flattered by the hon. Gentleman's reference to my style and am gratified by his apology.

The first Harrier GR5 squadron is now fully operational at RAF Wittering and was declared to NATO at the end of last year. The second, at RAF Gutersloh, is due to be declared later this year. This aircraft has a greatly improved capability and performance over the Harrier GR3, which it is replacing. Delivery of the first Harrier GR7, the night attack version of the GR5, is expected later this year. All Harrier GR5s will eventually be converted to GR7 standard. In addition, we intend, subject to the satisfactory resolution of contractual and other details, to order 14 new Harrier two-seat training aircraft. Those aircraft, known as the T-10, will meet the rigorous training requirements of the Harrier GR5 and GR7. They will also have a full operational capability.

Progress continues to be made on the enhancement——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the Minister any idea of the costs of the conversion of the GR5 to GR7? As a Minister, he will know better than anyone that such conversions can be technically difficult and extremely costly, and that they are not quite as simple as they might seem.

Mr. Clark: There is a note of it. As this is a point on which the House will wish to be enlightened, if the hon. Gentleman will remain in the Chamber until the conclusion of the debate, I shall certainly give that information then.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I say how welcome it is that the Royal Air Force is to acquire the Harrier T10, so that the training aeroplane is now compatible with the GR5 and the GR7, which the crews will have to fly? Are the GR3s to be retained for service in Belize, or will Belize have an all-GR5 and GR7 force?

Mr. Clark: I think that, in the fullness of time, it will be an all-GR5 and GR7 force, but plainly that cannot happen overnight.

Progress continues to be made on the enhancement of our air-to-air refuelling capability and the replacement of the aging Victor tanker fleet. Air-to-air refuelling increases the operational range and endurance of combat aircraft, allowing them to be deployed more flexibly. I can report that contracts have recently been placed for the conversion of a further 13 VC10 aircraft to a tanker role.

The Royal Air Force utility EH101 helicopter programme is currently in the project definition phase. This involves examining in detail the RAF's foreseen requirement against a range of options and establishing the costs and risks associated with each. The results of this work will provide the basis for decisions on the next stage of the programme.

I note that the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who frequently questions Ministers on this subject, is not in his place. I recognise, of course, that Wednesday is very late in the week for an SLD Member of Parliament to be in the House of Commons. I am sure that we all appreciate the urgency of the right hon. Gentleman's commitments outside.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Can my hon. Friend indicate when a decision on the EH101 utility version for the Air Force is likely to be taken?

Mr. Clark: I cannot give such an indication. We do not yet have enough information on which to base a decision. I am quite certain that it would be wrong to make a decision before we are entirely satisfied as to the specification and whether it meets our requirements.

The RAF attaches special importance to the morale and well-being of the Air Cadet Force.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I should like to put a point to the Minister before he leaves the question of procurement. He has not said anything about the LAH evaluation programme on which he has embarked and on which, he will agree, I have pressed him more than once. Of course, I understand why he is not yet in a position to say when he expects to complete that study. Can he say a word about the matter now? He will know better than most people that recent developments have pointed up the importance of the mobility factor to the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right. The LAH is a subject to which, with the whole question of balance in helicopter mixes in the battlefield, we are devoting great attention. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already said that a variety of broader deployment options and procurement options are being considered. Certainly, this programme, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, has a strong collaborative element, must be given very careful consideration in the context of an altered look at the whole question of the tactical deployment of helicopters.

I am delighted to report that we have recently placed orders for 53 modern gliders, to be known as Vigilant. Deliveries are scheduled to begin next month and to be completed by the end of this year. The Vigilants are self-launching gliders and will replace the existing fleet of Venture motor gliders, which are nearing the end of their useful life. This modernisation programme maintains the size of the glider fleet at over 140 aircraft and will ensure improved availability of gliders for student use.

The Bloodhound mark 2 air defence missile system has been in service with the Royal Air Force since 1964. Although Bloodhound continues to give useful service, it is becoming more difficult to maintain. There are no plans to withdraw Bloodhound from service immediately. However, to ensure more cost-effective management of the Bloodhound force into the future, we plan this year to concentrate it at only two locations. These will be RAF West Raynham and RAF Wattisham. The system will consequently be withdrawn from RAF North Coates, RAF Bawdsey, RAF Wyton and RAF Barkston Heath. Hon. Members in whose constituencies these stations lie will have received letters of explanation from me.

Mr. Wilkinson: What progress has been made to define the requirement for a medium-range surface-to-air missile to replace Bloodhound? When does my hon. Friend expect to be able to announce progress on this important matter?

Mr. Clark: If such a requirement is determined, it would probably be filled by buying another system off the shelf, as it were. We are at such an early stage, however, that it would be premature to go into this matter in any greater detail.

It is important to mention two major infrastructure programmes. We have nearly completed a programme to provide hardened aircraft shelters, which, as the House knows, are designed to increase the survivability of aircraft at airfields. That work has been funded largely by NATO.

Another of our major priorities, to which I shall return in a moment, is to enhance the quality of life for service personnel. In this context we are intending to improve the entire stock of married quarters and single-service living accommodation in the next 10 years. This, we believe, will contribute substantially to improving the conditions of service life.

No speech about the Royal Air Force would be complete without a reference to its most important asset the personnel who make up the service. In the past year, the trained strength of the Royal Air Force has fallen by about 4 per cent. There are increasing shortfalls in some officer branches as well as in ground engineering and support trades, but the shortfalls are manageable and the Royal Air Force maintains the ability to meet its operational commitments.

Applications for voluntary release of trained personnel remain higher than we would wish, although I am glad to be able to report that there are now some signs of improvement. We have devised a major revision of the terms of service for airmen for introduction this year, designed to provide greater flexibility and reward longer service. A revision of the terms of service for officers is also under consideration. Greater flexibility is also being incorporated into the rules governing the return to service of ex-airmen and women.

We are continuing to improve conditions of service by reducing turbulence, increasing job opportunities for wives, promoting greater job satisfaction generally, and improving working and living conditions. I remind the House of the extensive married quarter improvement programme currently in train.

One particularly important development has been the decision, announced last July, to broaden employment opportunities for female aircrew. As a result, the RAF is now recruiting female pilots, navigators and air engineers, with first-year targets of 25, 10 and four respectively. Some have already begun their training, having been selected according to the same criteria as men. We have found the response to this major change in policy most encouraging.

Mr. Dalyell: We all know that there is concern about naval wives. Has there been any consultation with Air Force wives about such recruitment?

Mr. Clark: We are dealing with a completely different situation from that envisaged in sending women to sea in ships. Women are being recruited to use their skills in a number of callings from which they have hitherto been excluded. I wholly applaud that development.

Mr. Dalyell: I asked the Minister whether there had been any consultation. Is the answer no?

Mr. Clark: I cannot imagine on what basis such consultation would be promulgated.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Those of us who have direct connections with the RAF and who have visited RAF stations, have spoken with the wives; we have found that many of them believe that the change of policy is interesting, as many of their daughters are interested in joining the service.

Mr. Clark: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, and I regard it as a progressive step.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Does my hon. Friend intend that women pilots should fly combat aircraft, or will he keep them strictly to flying transport aircraft or aircraft other than those in wartime use?

Mr. Clark: Personally, I would have some reservations about that, but it is a matter that we shall look at as the situation develops. We shall weigh up all the factors that emerge as their skills as pilots are tested and evaluated.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister has said that he has some reservations. I get the impression that the proposal has been ill thought out. What are the Minister's personal reservations?

Mr. Clark: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman four times already, and I will give way to him four more times, if he wishes. I always appreciate his interventions. My reservations—I emphasise that they are personal; perhaps I am over-fastidious—relate to women going into combat and flying combat aircraft. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but I associate women's special gifts with activities other than the taking of life. If a person goes into combat, the ultimate purpose is to kill the enemy, as those of us who were in the services know. I would be uncomfortable in considering that function being subject to disciplinary instruction to a woman.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister said that he would give way to me four more times, but I shall take up only one of them. What is the considered view of the Air Staff? Does the decision have the agreement of the Air Staff? The House is entitled to know what the advice from the Air Staff is.

Mr. Clark: This is a totally different subject. We are talking about a subject raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson)—women in combat. That is a long way even from the consideration, never mind the considered views, of the Air Staff. I told the House about the recruitment of pilots, navigators and air engineers. It is a long way into the future as to whether the skills that emerge should be used in combat.

Mr. Viggers: I share the concern of my hon. Friend about sending women into combat. Will he explore that comment further, asthat is exactly what will be happening in the Royal Navy?

Mr. Clark: We do not know what will happen. I do not want to get involved in that. There are differences between piloting a single-seater aircraft in combat, or piloting a bomber which will deliver a weapon system, and being a member of a crew of up to 1,000 in a situation, whether in combat or otherwise, which does not involve a woman in pulling the trigger, dropping a bomb or directing a missile.

I should like to conclude this review with a tribute to the Royal Air Force Reserve—the regular Reserve, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the RAF Volunteer

Reserve. We are profoundly indebted to them for their motivation and commitment, and for their competence and skills.

I should in particular make reference to the unstinting efforts of Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough as honorary inspector general of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, which have done much to achieve the current high standards. I welcome as his successor my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who will, I know, maintain the same high level of service and commitment.

Finally, I come to a subject that profoundly concerns all our personnel in all three services. The threat posed by terrorists of the Provisional Irish Republican Army continues to demand great vigilance from our service men and women and their families. Last autumn saw the particularly brutal murder in the Federal Republic of Germany of Corporal Maheshkumar Islania and his six-month old daughter, Nivruti—a dreadful event, which brought home to us all the depths of wickedness to which terrorists are prepared to descend. None the less, our people in all three services remain steadfastly determined to resist and overcome this threat, and we are taking a wide variety of measures designed to increase their security and to encourage their awareness of the threat and of how it can be countered.

I end on that sombre note, but I shall seek the leave of the House to address various points which may be raised by hon. Members, if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye at the conclusion of the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

4.35 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I join the Minister in paying tribute to the few who flew during the battle of Britain. As he said, this year is the 50th anniversary of the battle of Britain, and I am sure that throughout the country tributes will be made in appropriate ways. Opposition Members would like to be a part of those tributes.

Significantly, in working-class areas—and, indeed, throughout the country—there are a great many cenotaphs and memorials commemorating those brave people who went forth from the mines and factories, put on uniforms and fought to defend our freedoms. I join the Minister in paying tribute to those people and their families. I am pleased that this year the Government decided to treat war widows in a slightly better fashion. It was a step in the right direction.

The Minister was right to say that the battle of Britain was a close-run affair. That was because of the desperate state of our defences. I admire his usual honesty in acknowledging that there was a Tory Government in power at that time. Of course, I could mention certain instances that would highlight the paucity of our present air defences, but I must get on with my speech.

The announcement that women are to be trained to fly fast jets is a step forward. However, the problem of whether women should be used in combat requires greater discussion. The Government introduced the measure to allow women to go back to work in the coal mines—something which, coming from my background, I find appalling. Like the Minister, I also have reservations about women being involved in combat.

I am assured by the specialists in the Labour party—none of whom is here today—that women are capable of flying in combat roles. The physical constraints involving G-forces and tight turns although not necessarily over display areas might be the only reason why they could not fly in combat.

I join the Minister in condemning the cowardly indiscriminate bombing attacks on British service men and their families. There was a spate of bombings some years ago in Wales. I know one of the people who were responsible, and he received a long gaol sentence. He came from my village. Many say that such people are brave men, who are courageous in their cause. When that man was released, I told him that I could think of nothing more despicable or cowardly than to put a bomb in a left-luggage compartment at a railway station and then to walk away. In that instance the bomb was directed against people in Cardiff who were returning after work to the valleys. There is nothing brave about dumping a bag. The sooner that the people who give succour and support to terrorists realise that those are cowardly rather than brave acts, which require no physical courage, the better. Opposition Members condemn such actions and join the Minister in paying sympathy to the families of those who may have suffered as a result of such cowardly attacks.

Last Thursday the *Western Mail* which I know the Minister does not read because it circulates only in Wales, although a few copies find their way into the House carried a report of a rescue operation by a RAF Sea King helicopter operating out of RAF Brawdy in west Wales. Some 240 miles out in the Atlantic, the 20 seamen were rescued in the most appalling conditions in which, almost certainly, they would have lost their lives. The skill and courage of the pilot and aircrew was outstanding.

I commend, in particular, the bravery of the winchman, flight sergeant Graham Philips, who was washed overboard. If it were not for his lifeline back to the helicopter, he would have lost his life. It was RAF Brawdy's second long-range rescue in just a few days. The previous incident was in the same area of the Atlantic when a disabled ore carrier had to be disembarked.

Among our lifeboat crews, the helicopter crews of the search and rescue squadrons have an envied tradition of selfless courage and humanitarian acts. They deserve the commendation of the House for their bravery. I mention those incidents, first, to praise those who participate, but also to highlight some aspects of the future of sea and air rescue and the procurement of helicopters.

Some time ago the Government proposed the privatisation of sea and air rescue. Against a background of massive protests from both sides of the House, the proposals were modified or withdrawn. When he winds up, will the Minister give the present status of those proposals? There are fears that the Government will resurrect them and consider privatising the service. I warn the Minister that if the Government do so, he will encounter the same problems as he did before from hon. Members on both sides of the House.

If the Government are not to privatise the search and rescue service, what will they do about re-equipping the squadrons with new helicopters? The present Wessex helicopters are coming to the latter part of their operational lives. A decision must be made soon on their replacement; indeed, across a range of other helicopter requirements, a decision is required.

I reiterate the question of the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans): when will the Government place a firm order for the EH101? The Royal Navy pre-production aircraft,

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with a full mission system, has been flying since 24 October 1989. The anti-submarine variant, as currently specified and contracted, is going well. I understand that the RAF's intended Utility EH101 is well within schedule. All that is needed now, three years after the previous Secretary of State said that the Ministry of Defence was looking for 25 RAF and 50 Navy EH101s, is for the Government to make a decision.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman, with his interest in helicopters, will realise that we should purchase, not a particular helicopter, but the right helicopter, the best helicopter for the task that has to be performed. I hope that he will say that that is his view and what our Royal Air Force needs. We must be careful not to lock ourselves into a position where we never buy the right equipment.

Mr. Rogers: I think that that question would have been better directed to the Government than to me, because they have to make the decision, not me. I am rather alarmed if the hon. Gentleman, who I think is a member of the Select Committee on Defence——

Mr. Walker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rogers: No, he is not. Perhaps that explains—if I might say, in the kindest way—his ignorance on the matter.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Rogers: I see that the Chairman of the Select Committee is nodding.

I should explain the position to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), although I am sure that the Minister will do so in his wind-up speech. The Government have made a decision on the EH101. In 1987, the Secretary of State said that the Government were going to purchase 25 EH101s for the RAF and 50 for the Royal Navy. The helicopter has gone through project definition and pre-production trials. I think that nine have already flown. It is now merely a matter of integrating the mission system. One can go along that line, preparing for a project to come into operation, but at some stage a decision has to be made. Unless it is made now, the manufacturers and people involved in the industry will have a big gap in the middle of the 1990s when they will not have any orders. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Tayside, North is proposing that we should buy, not the Apache, but the Black Hawk or some other shoe horn variety. I am sure that they have all been considered, but I should have thought that the EH101 was, if I may repeat the expression that has already been used, a cast iron, copper-bottomed decision. The question is, when? That is what we are asking.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what he thinks the Government should do? Should the Government make a decision in favour of the EH101?

Mr. Rogers: Yes. The helicopter is important and the EH101 is vital to the industry. The requirements are known. The current contract available on the EH101 is a target cost-incentive contract which, when it was signed in March 1984, was hailed as a great step forward in defence contracting. At that time Sir Peter Levene extolled the virtues of the new process of procurement. One of the signal parts of such a contract is that the cost is shared between industry and Government. Certainly, the industry has already put its money where its mouth is and invested millions of pounds. It is now up to the Government to come up with firm orders so that it can proceed with production.

In Question Time some weeks ago, the Minister said that last October the Government entered into negotiations with the company for a maximum price contract. I do not see why we have to go on and on talking like this. The Chairman of the Select Committee is present and the Select Committee said, and it was implicit throughout the recently published report, that it was about time a decision was made.

Mr. Mans: Bearing in mind the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the EH101 and the need for air mobility, does he believe that this helicopter is the right one to purchase in view of the fact that it will also have to fit in with the various RAF transport aircraft to back up that air mobility?

Mr. Rogers: The operational roles of many of those aircraft are, I presume, under constant review by the Government. The Opposition have been asking for a major defence review for a long time. I should have thought that with the changes that are happening, particularly in eastern Europe, the Government should have a formal defence review. I accept that the position is dynamic and not static, but a decision has to be made. Unless we plan ahead, we shall not have the equipment for our service men, to whom the Minister paid great tribute today.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am sorry to keep interrupting the hon. Gentleman. Has he made any assessment of whether the EH101 is capable of being transported in the aircraft that the Royal Air Force has at present and looks like having for some time, particularly the Hercules?

Mr. Rogers: Unfortunately, such questions——

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): They should be directed to the Minister.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, they should be directed to the Minister, not me. I operate with a book and a pencil, and make visits. I certainly do not have the Civil Service to back me up. I should have thought that the Minister was the person to answer the questions. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North is interested in getting the answer, I am sure that the Minister will give it to him when he winds up.

I was disappointed to hear that the Government cannot award a contract for a new nose radar system for the European fighter aircraft. I had understood from a reply in an Adjournment debate to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) in January that everyone thought that Ferranti would get the ECR90 system. I should have thought that today was an admirable opportunity for the Government to make that announcement.

Mr. Alan Clark: That is not a Government decision.

Mr. Rogers: That is a daft statement. If the Government say that they will support the British electronics industry, in the form of the ECR90 system, the contract will go to British industry. To maintain that the

Government have no part in the procurement process is nonsense. The British and European technology involved in such a decision would ensure jobs for thousands of workers for several years. That would be a good decision, on which we would be prepared to congratulate the Government if they took it.

The contract for the nose radar is relevant only in the context of the development of the European fighter aircraft. All hon. Members are anxious that the EFA should be developed, preferably in its dual-capable role, undertaking air-to-air and air-to-surface missions.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the radar, crucial though it is, is not entirely in the gift of the British Government? EFA is a collaborative venture, and announcements must be made on the basis of collaborative discussion.

Mr. Rogers: I understand that, but if the Government are forceful enough, they can easily influence the outcome of the decisions. The German-led MSD-2000 is a project in which British technology will not lead; it is an adaption of an American system. Incidentally, the Foxhunter is still not in operation after 10 years—that is farcical—merely because American companies have been withholding the intellectual rights to their equipment. The more operations led by British companies, the better. The Government should have faith in British companies.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: Not for the moment; I want to get on.

Mr. Wilkinson: On Foxhunter?

Mr. Rogers: I am coming to Foxhunter later, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can wait until then.

The EFA's primary function as an agile fighter will fill a gap in RAF armaments. The Americans and the Soviets now have planes in operation that can outperform anything that we have—the Americans have the F15, the F16 and the F18, and the Soviets have their highly capable Fulcrum and Flanker. Both countries are actively offering those top range aircraft for export.

I want to take this opportunity to state the Labour party's wholehearted commitment to the conventional arms reduction talks and to what we hope will be an eventual treaty. The Opposition unequivocally support arms reductions. The CFE talks will, of course, affect the future size and shape of our air force, and the future RAF will be much smaller. If it is, the need for modern flexible equipment with a multi-role capability becomes even more important. Recently the German coalition partners, the Liberals, expressed opposition to the EFA, and I believe that Herr Genscher even stated that if they had any influence in the next German Government, they would withdraw from the programme. Certainly, delays causing cost overruns will make the programme a prime target for German defence cuts, even if only to buy an updated version of the American F18.

The Government continually reiterate their commitment to EFA and we have no reason to doubt that commitment, but we are anxious, given the Government's record of mismanagement of procurement, that this could well result in another hugely expensive procurement disaster. We accept that an order may be placed for fewer aircraft, but that factor could undermine the viability of the whole enterprise. Will the Minister confirm that his answer to my question on 15 January was correct? He said:

> "There has been no change in the declared production offtake of 250 aircraft."

Will he also elaborate on the rather brief answer that "our aim remains to bring EFA into service in the mid-1990s"?—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. *125-26*.]

Perhaps Conservative Members who have mentioned EFA missed that answer in *Hansard*. In what year in the mid-1990s are we likely to have the EFA? I found the Minister's answer intriguing.

It gives us no pleasure to outline the Government's ineptness in procurement, but their deficiencies exist. One has only to read speeches of the past few years to detect the big gaps in the Government's policies. In 1988, for instance, the then Minister of State said that, although there had been difficulties with the aircraft's Foxhunter air-intercept radar, radars to an agreed interim standard had been fitted.

In reply to a question yesterday the present Minister of State said:

> "Work on improving Foxhunter is well in hand. Radars to an agreed interim standard continue to be delivered for installation into the Tornado ADV by the RAF".

That denotes a marked lack of progress, even by this Government's standards. Nothing has changed in three years. Yesterday's reply went on:

> "These will shortly be followed by radars to the full technical standard".

I know that time has no meaning in the context of Foxhunter, but can the Minister hazard a guess as to what he means by "shortly"? Does he mean this year, next year or next century? Surely at some stage the Government must get to grips with the continuing scandal of a radar that is neither ready nor available for our aircraft.

Mr. Mans: Would the hon. Gentleman like to take this opportunity to correct his earlier statement on Foxhunter—that its delay was caused by the intellectual property rights on American parts in it? Does he agree that that is wholly false? Delays to that radar have nothing to do with American components being held up.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, I shall withdraw my statement. I was referring to UKADGE——

Mr. Wilkinson: The one is on the ground, the other in the air. Get this sorted out.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman does nothing in the House but talk about when he was in the RAF, so I should not hope to be as expert as he is. I have already explained to the House that a mistake was made and I was happy to do that.

Mr. Duffy: My hon. Friend is speaking about radar deficiency. Does he agree that quite the most glaring and persistent deficiency is the lack of a NATO identification friend or foe system? It is true that that is an Alliance problem, but the Government have a responsibility because the lack of such a system has endured throughout their tenure of office and there is no prospect of a change before the end of the decade.

Mr. Rogers: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention.

I should like to return to the subjects of Tornado and Foxhunter. The Minister of State has a battery of civil

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servants and the whole panoply of the Ministry of Defence behind him. That should help him to answer some questions when he is winding up. Perhaps his civil servants will tell him how many Tornado aircraft are still in storage. At the last count when we looked at the matter at the end of 1988 32 were in storage. That is £500 million worth tucked away in hangars at St Athan in south Wales. They are being stored at a cost of at least £60,000 a year. Have those 32 aircraft been brought into service? Perhaps hon. Members who intervened earlier can press the Government on that issue if they have the gumption to speak against the Government instead of making knee-jerk reactions to everything that the Minister said in his speech.

I shall now deal with intellectual rights and IUKADGE, the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system. There are many contenders for the prime spot in the league table of delays and slippages. I am sure that hon. Members will understand why at times people are confused by the ineptness of the Government, which has led to projects being behind time and cost overruns.

Mr. Brazier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: No, because I want to develop my theme. IUKADGE was considered necessary in the 1970s, ordered in the 1980s and is still not available. What is more, it does not seem as if it is likely to be available. The Government evade the issue and refuse to answer questions. They use the old rag of commercial confidence in the same way as many Conservative Members wrap themselves in the Union Jack when questions on matters of national importance are asked.

The saga has been going on for a long time. The consortium of one United States and two United Kingdom firms is not getting to grips with the problem. As Sir Richard Mottram told the Select Committee on Defence, the problem is that there is difficulty in getting the software-related part of the system to work to our satisfaction. Perhaps in his wind-up speech the Minister will tell us when the system is likely to come fully into service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) spoke in last year's debate shortly after his election to the House, and he outlined the fiasco of the air-launched anti-radiation missile, the ALARM system. The Select Committee on Defence had previously identified the fact that it was £260 million over budget and several years behind schedule and said that this was a matter of great concern. Can the Minister tell us the present position and whether we shall ever get the missile?

Other issues can be raised later in the debate, but before I finish I should like to refer to the problem mentioned by the Minister of the loss of trained and highly skilled personnel from the Royal Air Force. Pilot losses are now becoming significant. The Minister tended to gloss over that and I think that he said that it was a manageable situation. The number of pilots leaving before they complete their engagements is increasing year by year. If the Government are managing, they are certainly not managing to reduce the outflow of those very expensively trained pilots. There is a similar pattern in the loss of engineers and craftsmen. Although the Minister says that there is no danger at the moment, surely a loss of such dimensions must pose a threat to the operational efficiency of the service.

The defence estimates show that the number of apprentices taken on has dropped from 264 in 1983 to 136 in 1988. Can the Minister tell the House why that is so, and whether any steps will be taken to rectify the matter? Obviously, some service men have left for better or more lucrative employment. However, that option has always been there. Our service men have not always been the best paid people in society. I have talked to many service men and I think that they are leaving because the morale in the service at present is low. There are many reasons for that. It is not just a matter of pay, although the Government's decision to pay only a 6·5 per cent. increase in April and to hold over 3 per cent. until next January has not helped morale.

The phrase that I heard was that the quality of service life was getting worse, and that phrase was used last year by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). Unlike many civilian jobs, there are no extras or perks in the services, such as company cars or expense accounts. The facilities for sport, recreation and leisure are vital for maintaining morale and developing good team spirit. The Wednesday afternoon activities in many camps and units were as vital to the efficiency of the service as any other form of training. Now, sportsmen in the services find that facilities are being cut and that people selected for representative service teams are often precluded from taking part because there is insufficient cover in the station. That is only part of what is happening.

Some hon. Members who served in the Royal Air Force many years ago may say no and shake their head. However, last year the hon. Member for Ryedale gave us an account of his secondment to the Royal Air Force under an experimental scheme, which he said was similar to the industry and Parliament scheme. The hon. Gentleman is not present, but in last year's debate he said:

"There is also concern throughout the Air Force at the general gradual erosion of the quality of service life. As the financial quest for efficiency and value for money is pursued, for which clear support exists within the Air Force, morale, motivation and an esprit de corps remain vital. The removal of perceived benefits and the imposition of what appear to be penny-pinching changes, such as a reduction in the number of leave warrants, charging for food on detachments, the abolition of home-to-duty travel allowances, are not popular. It would be regrettable if, in pursuit of efficiency, there was a reduction in effectiveness."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 1078.]

That was a Conservative Member speaking after spending a year with the forces.

On top of all that, we have the imposition of the poll tax, which is especially acute for junior ranks. Service men and women pay rates as part of their quartering charges but now they will be faced with a much higher cost. Will the Minister make some form of recompense to junior ranks for what could be in some cases a 10 times increase in what they now have to pay? Perhaps we can get an answer to that before the end of the debate.

This debate is important. Some people doubt the value of single service debates because they say that we have a defence debate, which very often is not well supported. I happen to think that these debates are important for our service men and their services. Some Opposition Members have a great interest in this, and some Tory Members are ex-service men and have great expertise. Regardless of all

that, I hope that the tradition of having single service debates will remain. That is why I have great pleasure in giving this speech.

5.10 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I am happy to join my hon. Friend the Minister in congratulating the Royal Air Force on the 50th anniversary of the battle of Britain—its greatest battle honour. The RAF may be the junior service, but it has a distinguished history. It plays a considerable part in the defence structure of NATO, and particularly in the central front and the second tactical air force in Germany. Without doubt, it will have an important role to play in the future, although I suspect that that will be very different from the one that it is playing now.

I know what an emotive subject low flying is and I understand the concerns expressed by many hon. Members. The Select Committee on Defence, of which I am the Chairman, has been conducting an inquiry into the matter for the past five or six months, and hopes to report to the House between Easter and Whitsun. We have visited RAF stations in the United Kingdom and Germany and I want to say—I am sure on behalf of all my colleagues—how impressed we were with the professionalism, dedication, enthusiasm and the general spirit that prevails in all the RAF stations that we visited. They are all acutely aware of the harm that they cause and the concern about their low flying, but as long as we have aircraft that are required to deliver munitions against a potential enemy, pilots will have to learn in peacetime how to acquire the skills to do so. One example that is so recent that everyone can remember it is the performance of the RAF in the Falkland Islands as a result of the low-flying training that it had done, largely in rural areas.

I shall offer some thoughts about the future. As a result of all the well-known strategies in place in the central front, we have a large Army, a considerable Air Force and a considerable Navy, all devoted to NATO and to the defence of the western Alliance against the threat from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact. As each day goes by, it becomes clearer that the threat, although still there, is diminishing. One has a permanent optimism about those changes, which will mean that we can still assure our defence and that of our allies, but at a lower level than hitherto. That must be welcome news for everybody.

However, we shall not be able suddenly to slash our defence expenditure. Of itself, that would be destabilising and, in certain circumstances, could be self-defeating. We should be looking, as most of us are—I am certain that the Government are—at where we shall be within five to 10 years. We should be able to commit a lesser effort, but an equally effective one, against a threat that will reduce but is likely still to be present in some form or another, at least to the end of the century.

In that context, I shall look at the way in which the RAF is deployed in Germany in support of the British Army of the Rhine or, more correctly, the Northern Army Group, if it should come to hostilities. I have said before how ludicrous it is that on the central front in Germany the ground forces are supported by five different national air forces flying some 17 different types of aircraft, all with their own research and development and their own production, and at a vastly greater cost than if it had been possible to rationalise that force early on.

We now have an opportunity to take a completely fresh look at the way in which we have carried out our joint affairs and to rationalise. If we do not do that, we shall continue to spend countless pounds, dollars, marks, francs, guilders and all the rest, while nations continue to make their own contributions—some large, some smaller, inevitably—and waste resources that, if pooled, could be used to better effect.

No one knows what will come out of the conventional forces talks except, we hope, some reductions now, and probably some more significant reductions when the next round starts. Nobody knows how we shall best be able not to redeploy but to regroup those forces that will need to stay on the continent of Europe for the foreseeable future. I am sure that we shall be able to make a smaller contribution, but I am certain that it will have to be there in some form to guarantee the new European scene.

To that extent, it is supremely important that we maintain the spirit that has kept NATO together over the past 40 or so years, but in doing so we should not simply be saying, "Let us take away a squadron or two, or a brigade, or a division and reduce the British, German or Dutch contribution." We should look at the totality, and how best we can, together, provide a force that will guarantee the territorial integrity of the NATO nations.

If we do not close our minds to any of the options, we shall be surprised at how many ways that can be achieved. One could internationalise the NATO force. I do not know whether that is the right answer, because that would give rise to many problems. We could group together the ground forces. There will always have to be such ground forces because the nature of an army is that it is there to protect a territory. That could be grouped internationally, perhaps with national brigades and an international division, or perhaps with a national division and an international corps. I am not trying to design a blueprint. I am trying to give some thoughts on how this might happen.

A question will then arise: who is to provide the close air support and fighter ground offensive capability over that force? Continuing to do that with five nations and 17 different types of aircraft would become ever more ridiculous. I hope that the Government will take a radical look at how we, within the NATO Alliance, can change the nature of our contributions so that, by specialising in roles, we can achieve together much more effectively what is now achieved by everyone carrying out the same task.

It is only logical that the Germans should take the greatest part of the role of the air forces over the central front. It is their territory and their air space and they can be best deployed to do that job. Why we insisted, or continue to insist, that RAF aircraft should fly over British forces over the central front is beyond me, and has been beyond me for long time. If it came to war, that would not happen anyway after the first day or two. Nevertheless, we have stuck to the system because we have felt constrained to do so because of national sovereignty problems, defence industrial problems and a whole host of other problems. We have put the whole subject of role specialisation into the "too difficult" category. It must come out of that cubbyhole, be dusted down and looked at in a way that does not foreclose any of the arguments that might be put forward.

If I, or any of the other 50 or 60 hon. Members present, were asked to forecast where we might be in 10 years, I am sure that we would turn out to be wrong. Looking for a

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way forward, it seems logical that, while we must continue to produce a part of the ground defence support to NATO on the continent of Europe, we must ask whether we need to continue to provide the air support for those ground forces or whether that could be more efficiently and effectively done by the European nations, the Germans in particular, while we return and attend to the air defence of the United Kingdom, which has been one of the most neglected areas of our defence over the years because of the level of our commitment to NATO.

In return for making a lesser effort there, perhaps he could undertake to relieve some of our continental European allies of some of the burdens in the Channel and the eastern Atlantic, which we are better equipped to carry ourselves.

Whenever that argument has been raised, it has been dismissed by Ministers in many countries as not being a practical way forward because of the question of national sovereignty. We have never had national sovereignty over defence since NATO was formed, and I thank goodness for that. We have been able for all these years to dedicate ourselves and most of our forces totally to the NATO structure in advance of hostilities. Yet the suggestion that they would not be our own aeroplanes over our own soldiers was regarded as being a derogation of national sovereignty. I do not see that argument.

In approaching the crucial decisions that we must take for the shape and size of our defence forces for the coming five to 10 years we must consider the question of role specialisation and acknowledge that, while the Air Force has an important job in the future, it should not be dissipated in the way that it has been over the years, in support of our troops in the central front.

We shall all have to readjust our defence commitments among the NATO allies to provide the best answer for each nation. There will have to be some horse trading about production, defence industries and so on—that will happen anyway—so that the changes in reducing the level of forces that we shall need can be done logically, sensibly and, above all, in a way that will give us the best value for money in an inevitably reduced defence budget in which value for money will become even more important.

5.22 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I apologise for not having been in my place for the whole of the Minister's speech. My absence was due to an obligation outside the House, but I informed the Minister in advance that I would not be present to hear all his remarks.

Like others, I join in the congratulations to the Royal Air Force on the 50th anniversary of the battle of Britain. Those of us who were born during the war were almost certainly reared on the tales of bravery, courage and commitment that were displayed by many young men in those far-off days. It has become part of the fabric of the history of the forces, not only of the RAF but of the services in general.

We should welcome a single service debate such as this, though it may be difficult to keep one's remarks to one service. That was demonstrated eloquently recently when we debated the Royal Navy. Such is the pace of political change in Europe that there must inevitably be implications for defence policy. Invariably, those implications affect not one service but the overall defence requirement, including the size and strength of the components that go towards it.

The defence requirement should always be dictated by the nature of the threat and, as the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) said, and as is generally recognised in the House, the threat has diminished considerably. What, though, if the old praetorian guard of the Politburo in the Soviet Union were suddenly to reassert itself? Is it feasible or possible for there to be a reversal of what are the current main elements of Soviet policy?

We are obliged to ask whether any Soviet leadership in the 1990s would be willing or able to reverse the downward trend in defence spending, to reverse the demobilisation of substantial numbers of troops, to re-establish hardline Communist regimes by force in eastern Europe, to reintroduce a strategy by which, in any future East-West conflict, the Soviet Union and its allies would revert to a massive rolling advance into western Europe. In short, do we now believe that the Soviet Union is in any position to recreate a hegemony based on a revised Warsaw pact? I suspect that the answer to all those questions is undoubtedly in the negative.

But we must remember that the Soviet Union is beset by uncertainties. Domestically, it is beset by demands for economic progress and human rights and, within the federation of which Russia is the central part, by demands for autonomy in the Baltic states, with the emergence of ethnic or racial conflicts between components such as Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I do not think any of us considers that there is likely to be a resumption of the cold war as we have known it in the last 20 or 25 years. But even with all those uncertainties and even with no reversal of what has happened under Mr. Gorbachev, the Soviet Union will remain a major military power. It will continue to have a vast nuclear potential and, more significantly, because of the nature of the change, unexpected and unstructured as it is, it may be even more unpredictable, it may be alienated, it may be sulking and it may be subject to a sense of injured pride.

If the break-up of the Soviet Union or a slackening of the ties that bind it together occurs as a result of the extraordinary political change that is taking place, who will have access to the substantial number of nuclear weapons that the Soviet Union possesses? In an authoritarian repressive regime, control of matters of that kind is much easier. In a fissiparous chorus of discontented republics, how much more difficult it would be to maintain what we on this side of what was once called the iron curtain would regard as the necessary control.

That analysis leads to the view that the defence policy of this country and of the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance—and in particular the policy that we follow for the RAF—must remain watchful and alert to the threat as it is presently constituted, rather than to the threat as it might have been.

The policy that we follow for the RAF must inevitably depend on political, technological and financial factors. That has always been the case. Those factors must have caused the abandonment of the strategic bombing and nuclear deterrent role of the RAF in the late 1960s. They must have had an effect on the air support role of the RAF, increasing in the 1960s, declining to some extent after 1970

and perhaps now requiring to be increased markedly if rapid deployment is to play an increasing role in our overall defence policy.

Will not the factors to which I have referred have an effect on the current strategy of attempting to achieve air dominance in time of war? Those factors should make us sceptical of the need for equipping Tornado aircraft with the SRAM-T—the short-range attack missile—which is at least in the contemplation of the Government. Surely those factors must have some effect on our judgment about whether we should pursue the original requirement of 250 European fighter aircraft. Ministers have recently reaffirmed their commitment in that regard, and I do not suggest that we should be told their precise thinking about the exact number during today's debate, but I cannot believe that they are not reconsidering; it would be less than prudent of them not to.

We have heard about the concern felt by people in Federal Germany, who may or may not be in pivotal positions after next December's elections, about the original commitment entered into by Federal Germany itself. Any substantial reduction by the Germans might put in jeopardy the financial viability of the whole European fighter aircraft project. As has been said, the survival of some jobs in the United Kingdom defence industry appears—at least at present—to depend largely on the awarding of the radar contract, but a contract awarded for aircraft that are not built will not bring much benefit.

I do not think that anyone would suggest that we can ignore Germany's progress towards unification or the apparently successful progress towards an agreement in the first phase of the talks on conventional forces in Europe. Nor can we ignore the fact that, if the first phase is concluded successfully, the pressure to move to the second and third phases will be that much greater. German unification will undoubtedly take place; the question that we are all bound to ask is what conditions will attach to it, and how will they dictate the nature of our defence requirements? As the hon. Member for Hampshire, East freely recognised, it seems unlikely—whatever the terms of those conditions—that the RAF will retain its present role and numbers in Federal Germany.

A debate on a single service allows us to raise issues directly concerned with that service. I have raised with the Minister on several occasions the question of the future of the search and rescue operations at RAF Leuchars, which is in my constituency, and I suspect that he anticipated that I would return to it yet again today. As he knows, as a result of the review of search and rescue operations the opportunity of night-time flying has been withdrawn from RAF Leuchars. If an operation begins in daylight, however, it may be finished in darkness: that means that the crews must train in darkness, and therefore retain the capability of night-time flying.

I ask the Ministry of Defence to consider giving more discretion to the co-ordinating centre at RAF Pitreavie. There is, as it were, a chink of light: in answer to a recent question from me, the Minister of State said that night-time operations would be permitted in the event of, for instance, a major disaster. If that is so, those who may have to fly in such operations must receive training to equip them with the necessary skills and aptitudes.

The issue of search and rescue is potentially of great political benefit to the RAF. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has said on other occasions, nothing does more for the reputation of the RAF than the notion of the friendly yellow helicopter coming over the horizon to rescue people in difficulty. We have seen yet more examples of the dedication, commitment and bravery of search and rescue crews during the severe weather in the Highlands over the past couple of days.

Search and rescue is provided primarily for military purposes, but its service to the civilian community—90 per cent. of its operations are for civilian purposes—makes a substantial contribution to good public relations, for which the Ministry of Defence in general and the RAF in particular are responsible. I hope that Ministers will ensure that such operations are maintained at RAF Leuchars, and will consider whether the Wessex aircraft should be replaced by the Sea King, a question which has been raised a number of times since the review.

Mr. Bill Walker: The time must rapidly be approaching when that will happen. The Sea King has all the capabilities for which the hon. and learned Gentleman is asking, and its adoption would solve many of the problems that caused the Wessex to be withdrawn. Like him, I am optimistic about the future of search and rescue operations —especially those at Leuchars, which are so important to my constituents.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman will recall that, when the debate about the future of RAF Leuchars was at its height, there was some support for the Wessex on the basis that it was more manoeuvrable in the Scottish mountains. That argument was promoted with some force by those with connections with the mountain rescue teams. If, however, there is any question about night-time operations from RAF Leuchars, any reduction in manoeuvrability in the Scottish mountains is a price that I am willing to pay for the sake of Sea King deployment and 24-hour operations.

I am sure that I am not the only hon. Member to await with great interest the report of the Select Committee on Defence. I hope that its conclusions will marry the necessity for low-flying operations with the nature of the threat that we now face. The National Audit Office report on low flying occasioned great concern about the possible prospect of an increase, particularly in Scotland. I know that the Government are sensitive to the matter, but I stress that they ignore at their peril the political consequences of any increase in low flying in certain parts of Scotland.

Some of my constituents—both members of the RAF serving at Leuchars and their spouses—have raised with me the recent introduction of a system of retention bonuses, designed to deal with the problem of premature voluntary release. There is some disappointment among the longer-serving airmen and women that the level of bonuses is not related simply to the length of service. They understand why the system has been introduced, but draw a parallel with civilian arrangements: the longer someone serves his company, the greater the benefits he will derive in terms of salary, gratuity or pension. I hope that the Minister, if he cannot deal with that point this evening, will take into account the feeling that rewards should be related directly to length of service.

Our debates of the past 12 months or so have demonstrated that there is now far more unanimity in our views. Of course there will always be differences between all parties on defence matters, but it would be a curious consequence of glasnost and perestroika, and the end of

[Mr. Campbell]

the cold war in Europe, if they brought about in the United Kingdom a rather less partisan approach to defence than we saw in the general elections of 1979, 1983 and 1987.

I hope that the continuing debate about the defence requirements of the United Kingdom and the future of the North Atlantic Alliance and our relationships in Europe will be open and above board, and that all parties and, indeed, the public will feel that they have a legitimate interest to participate. It is clear that, whatever our defence requirements may be in future, the professionalism and commitment of the Royal Air Force will undoubtedly be at the same premium as they were during the battle of Britain 50 years ago. The changed circumstances and the different relationships between what we once described as the West and the East will no less require and rely for their continuance and stability on the professionalism and commitment of our forces, and the Royal Air Force will continue to make a major and significant contribution.

5.40 pm

Sir John Hunt (Ravensbourne): After more than 25 yeas as a Member of Parliament, this is the first occasion on which I have ventured to intervene in an RAF debate. I have a feeling that it may be another 25 years before I seek to catch your eye again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in one of these annual debates. I am pleased to have the opportunity to say just a few words on a matter of great concern and importance to my constituents. I refer to the proposed closure of the officer and aircrew selection centre at RAF Biggin Hill.

Mr. Bill Walker *indicated assent.*

Sir John Hunt: I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) nodding his head, because he was kind enough to participate in an Adjournment debate on the matter last year.

No doubt my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will also recall the Adjournment debate on 16 June 1989 in which I reported the dismay and distress which the proposed closure had caused in my constituency and over a much wider area. In recent months, I have received letters from virtually all over the world. It is a sad irony that the proposed closure of RAF Biggin Hill should coincide with the 50th anniversary of the battle of Britain, which has already been alluded to by a number of hon. Gentlemen in today's debate. The airmen of Biggin Hill played a notable and historic part in that battle.

In my Adjournment debate last year, I queried in particular the costings of the proposed move to RAF Cranwell, the likely level of capital receipts from the disposal of the Biggin Hill site and the cost of building the additional accommodation required at Cranwell. I am bound to say that in his reply to that debate my hon. Friend the Minister was less than forthcoming in providing specific information on those points. However, perhaps his reticence was understandable when one recalls that the original estimates of the likely capital receipts included the proceeds of the disposal of the married quarters on the site.

It is my understanding that the Ministry of Defence has subsequently discovered that the anticipated demand for officers' married quarters in the Greater London area is now so great that the married quarters at Biggin Hill will have to be retained for the foreseeable future. I should like some confirmation of that later in the debate. If that is so, the original balance sheet in respect of the proposed closure of RAF Biggin Hill is already unreliable and out of date.

The most crucially relevant and important factor to the future of RAF Biggin Hill is the dramatic changes which have taken place in recent months in our relations with eastern Europe and the implications of that for our defence planning, which has already been referred to this afternoon.

The other day, I read that a group of senior Ministers is currently examining how Britain's armed forces can be reduced and reorganised in the light of recent international events. What can be the sense of proceeding with the closure of RAF Biggin Hill and spending millions of pounds on a new selection centre before we have finally established the future needs of the RAF? After all, if the climate of East-West relations continues to improve, as we all hope it will, there is likely to be a significant reduction in our regular forces, with a corresponding reduction in the annual officer recruitment targets.

As we know, the move from Biggin Hill to Cranwell is planned to take place in four years' time. Given the current pace of international events, it would be foolish and irresponsible to persist with that move in present circumstances. It would surely make much more sense to halt the proposed move to Cranwell now, or at the very least to impose a moratorium on new building for which there is no immediate need, until our future defence requirements have been fully analysed and assessed.

Additionally, the prospect of smaller regular forces seems to add attraction to the often-mooted idea of one tri-service officer selection centre. As my hon. Friend will know, RAF Biggin Hill is already in a sense tri-service, in that specialist medical testing for the Royal Navy and the Army is carried out in addition to the aircrew selection work. In the present climate of detente, that is another possibility that should be considered for RAF Biggin Hill before we proceed with that precipitate and unnecessary move to Cranwell.

There is now a compelling case to stop, or at least to defer, the proposed closure of RAF Biggin Hill. We could then continue operating the selection centre there until the future needs of all three services were known. We could then assess the most sensible and economical use of resources in the light of the changed and changing situation. I commend that course to our Defence Ministers, and I hope that they will make some comments on the suggestions I have made, and hopefully express some sympathy for them. I apologise for dealing solely with that parochial point, but it is of great importance to my constituency.

5.47 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I trust that I shall be forgiven for absenting myself from the debate for an hour or so because of a speaking engagement, but I look forward to being present for the winding-up speeches.

The hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt) should not apologise for raising a matter which he described as parochial, as it is obviously close to the hearts of his constituents and receives wider sympathy given the

history of the base to which he referred. I was watching the Ministers' faces during the debate, and I think that they are beginning to look sympathetic.

In their opening speeches, the Minister and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) rightly condemned the cowardly attacks by terrorists on service men and their families. It says much for their courage that, like their colleagues in the Ulster Defence Regiment, in Army units particularly in Northern Ireland and Germany, and in the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland, those forces have never been deflected from what they consider their plain course of duty. We honour and pay tribute to them for that. I know that we can rely on Defence Ministers to ensure that the maximum protection is afforded to the families of service men wherever they may be posted. Those families and service men will take much encouragement from the all-party support that has been so evident in the debate.

I should like to pay tribute to the Royal Air Force component in Northern Ireland. May I mention in particular the senior Royal Air Force officer in Northern Ireland, Group Captain Hawkins. He is a truly outstanding officer and does a superb job of co-ordinating the flying element, which is a many-sided commitment, and also has under his command the resident squadron of the Royal Air Force Regiment. It contributes greatly to security, not only in the immediate vicinity of the Royal Air Force bases in Northern Ireland but over a wide area of the Province. The ability of those squadrons to establish a good relationship with the other arms of the security forces is noteworthy and encouraging. The Royal Air Force Regiment has developed greatly since it felt able to dispense with my services in 1946.

In the early part of his speech, the Minister rightly suggested that we should continue to make the necessary resources available to all the fighting services, and used the phrase, which I hope was not accidental, "particularly the Royal Air Force", or words to that effect.

The Minister reminded the House of the events of 1940 and rightly and accurately said:

"the battle of Britain was a very close-run thing."

It might easily have gone the other way had the masterminds in the Luftwaffe been aware of the great advantage of low-flying tactics, which would have enabled it to duck under our radar. As someone who has lived for almost 70 years on the perimeter of a Royal Air Force station, I can understand the annoyance caused by low-flying jets, but I accept that it is absolutely necessary.

No one will take issue with me when I say that Fighter Command saved Britain in 1940. But it did much more than that. The Royal Air Force turned out to be the invincible guarantor of the freedom of other nations. In a sense, it provided an effective long-stop.

There is a certain parallel with the position today. As hon. Members have conceded, Europe is in the melting pot. Regrouping is taking place with breathtaking speed. The political crust is breaking up and the balance of power is changing faster than in any decade this century. For different reasons, Russian and American influence is weakening.

The cosy relationships within the EEC are giving way to a degree of mutual suspicion. I put it no higher than that, but there are forces at work that cannot be tamed and will not be harnessed. When the parts of the jigsaw finally come to rest, the power pattern of Europe will look very different from a year ago.

The hon. Member for Rhondda challenged the Government to give their ideas on a review of defence policies in the light of the events in Europe. My humble advice would be that, until the European map is stabilised, we cannot sensibly make an accurate threat assessment. The threat in Europe would not necessarily come from the Soviet Union. It would be alarmist to identify any possible new source, but we can re-learn the lesson of 1940. Even with the Channel tunnel, Britain is unlikely to be overrun in a conventional war by a European land power.

I do not belittle the need for an effective and well-equipped Army, and I certainly do not dismiss the importance of the vital role of the Royal Navy, but because of the mobility and strike capacity of air power, we must acknowledge that the guarantor role will inevitably belong to the Royal Air Force.

The air defence of the United Kingdom is very important, but that is only the outward and visible aspect of that wider guarantor responsibility. For that reason, I welcome the determination implicit in the debate that, whatever the attractions of various propositions, the House must never make the mistake of our predecessors in the 1930s and for the second time run the risk of another close-run thing.

5.55 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): It was either by good fortune or good planning that the Chief of the Air Staff brought his presentation team to the House only a few days ago. It was perhaps less good fortune that we were constantly interrupted by Divisions in the House, but it gave many hon. Members the opportunity to see for themselves the present image of the Royal Air Force. I am sure that they were impressed not only by the quality of life and equipment portrayed but by the high standard of the team that made the presentation.

The main role of that team is to take the Air Force's story around the country and to show it in the community. We know that the Air Force attaches much importance to establishing close relationships with the areas around its bases, but most of the country is not near an RAF base. It is extremely important, therefore, that the service encourages the closest possible relationship with the wider civil community.

A publication entitled "Royal Air Force 89" was recently produced. It will be an annual publication and I congratulate Sir Peter Harding, the Chief of the Air Staff, on his initiative, and Squadron Leader Morris, its editor, on getting the style of the publication exactly right; it is interesting and informative and will, I hope, be widely read. I trust that its publication will continue for a long time.

I have the pleasure of having just started on the armed forces parliamentary scheme between the House and the RAF. I am at the earliest stages of what will obviously be an extensive and interesting programme. So far, I have visited only one flying base—the central flying school—but where better could one start than the oldest flying school in the world, which was formed in 1911. My visit demonstrated to me the superb standard of airmanship in the Royal Air Force—the quality that gives it the edge over the other NATO services.

The main objective of the time that I shall spend with the service in the forthcoming year is to meet and talk to

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

people—not just commanders of stations and units but the pilots, aircrew and those who support the aircraft in engineering, administration and supply.

The Chief of the Air Staff has gone on record as saying that people must come first in the Air Force of today, and I am sure that that is the correct priority. From what I have seen in the few hours that I have spent so far with the Air Force, I have no doubt that the quality of its personnel is as high today as it ever has been.

I should like to concentrate on personnel. The life of a service man is inevitably turbulent. I can think of no other occupation that involves moving one's home so frequently and regularly. That is becoming more significant than it was in the past. We have a higher rate of home ownership, and if one's career requires one to move every two or three years, one will experience considerable problems in establishing a home. I pay tribute to the long-standing efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) to introduce a scheme that will be of advantage to service men in overcoming that problem.

Frequent moves also affect the careers of the wives of service men. Far more wives have occupations than in the past, and while the husband's career is forwarded by moves from place to place, that has the opposite effect on the career of his wife, who must change her job every two or three years. It is difficult to counter that problem.

I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that particular attention was being paid to establishing a career pattern for wives. Sometimes husbands and wives can serve together in the RAF. I hope that it will be possible to post them either to the same station or to reasonably close stations so that they can maintain a normal family life, with the wife continuing to serve.

Significant changes in allowances were made a little while ago, and some necessary and overdue improvements resulted, but the improvements were basically financed by withdrawals of and reductions in allowances in other directions. The aim was to have a self-financing exercise. Worrying anomalies have been created. I hope that, in winding up, my hon. Friend the Minister will announce that the problem is being addressed and that there will be a review of those allowances.

There are good reasons for increasing the number of civilians in units in the support roles, but one effect is to reduce the number of men and women in uniform available to carry out the secondary duties for which service personnel are needed. I refer in particular to the need these days for regular guard duty to be carried out on all bases. Reference has been made to the cowardly attacks by terrorists from time to time, which are a constant threat to all the service's premises. That has meant that an intensive guard has had to be mounted. The service men on the base are normally the only people available to carry out that duty. As civilianisation expands, the number of people available to mount guard duty decreases, and we are in danger of having a vicious circle.

It is hard to recruit administrative and catering personnel, for example, because of the constant attraction of civilian life. As the job of supplying and providing support in the RAF requires ever-increasing guard duties, it becomes harder to retain people in jobs where there is already a scarcity of personnel. Is there not a case for increasing the strength of the Royal Air Force police? They are specialists in guard duties. I am sure that more RAF police on bases would be some solution to a problem that has resulted from guard duty coming around far too often on some stations.

We should look into the idea of using reserve units to guard bases. Perhaps the current legal problems associated with that can be overcome. I should have thought that many people in civilian life would willingly serve in a reserve unit at their local base and that they could be used in that way. In the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the Honorary Inspector General of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, I suggest that we could start forming such reserve units in the north-east of England at some of the RAF bases in my region.

On the north-south divide, those of us who come from the north are well aware that life is better there. Costs are often much higher in the south. This will increasingly be a problem in retaining service men, as many of our bases are traditionally in the south. It is also difficult to recruit and retain the necessary civilians, because Ministry of Defence pay rates tend to be less competitive in the south. I suggest that there is thus an argument for building up the service in the north. There will be inevitable changes in the composition and basing of the RAF in the years ahead—there always have been changes, and it seems likely, given the present scenario, that those changes will become greater. We should bear in mind the advantage to the service in having bases in the north in terms of retention and the interests of individual service men.

On retention, a problem exists because a young second pilot on an airliner can start his career at the same pay as his wing commander in the Air Force. Young pilots who have been trained to a superlative level of skill by the Royal Air Force are attracted by the idea of leaving and securing a high income in commercial aviation. Retaining pilots will not only save the £3 million that it costs to train a fast jet pilot but lead to a reduction in low flying.

The House understands the need for low flying. I know from my discussions with the central flying school of the high priority that the RAF gives to the need to cause the least disturbance to the population beneath. It is given a high priority in all training. Much of the low-flying training takes place during a pilot's initial training. By reducing the outflow of pilots from the service, we would reduce the number needing training, which would not only be a cost saving but reduce the amount of low flying necessary.

There is also a problem in retaining those involved in the ground trades. The number of young people who provide a recruiting pool is falling by 25 per cent. The fact that the service is turning increasingly to the role of women is a step in the right direction. My hon. Friend the Minister referred to pilots and aircrew, to which ladies are now being recruited. There has also been a big increase in the number of women employed in the ground trades. Although women are being recruited to aircrew for the first time, women have made an excellent contribution to the ground trades for many years, and it will increase in the future. I understand that 10 per cent. of those working in the ground trades in the service will be women, who will make a very important contribution.

The youth training scheme has been a great success in the Air Force. It is a benefit to the young people involved, 80 per cent. of whom sign on for a career in the service. The scheme provides a useful introduction to the service for people with the right enthusiasm.

On that point, the Air Training Corps continues to play an important role in the community and in providing young people for the services. There are squadrons all over the country, with some 40,000 boys and girls serving in the corps. I am proud of my local units and am always impressed by the smartness of the turnout at North Shields and Whitley Bay, which reflects the smartness and enthusiasm of the regular Air Force.

It is my happy annual duty to present the prizes at North Shields. A large number of the prizes are won in regional competitions, and I believe that it must be one of the most worthy squadrons anywhere. It has a splendid record. I was particularly impressed on the last occasion by the fact that the senior cadet was an extremely smart young lady. I pay tribute to the instructors who give so readily of their time in the thousand or so squadrons in Britain. We can all be grateful to them for their work in instilling good citizenship in the cadets and providing the RAF with a large part of its future membership.

I have spoken mainly about people, but I should like to say something on the equipment front. I am a great supporter of the European fighter aircraft. It is essential for the future of the RAF and this counry's defence. The Select Committee on Defence did us a service recently in drawing attention to the fact that we still do not know what we will do about replacing the Wessex helicopter, which is now 30 years old. It is more than 10 years since the Air Staff target for the replacement was produced.

The reason for the delay is the continuing uncertainty about the requirements. If we do not know what we want, it is not surprising that we have not found the answer. But the answer will have to be found and if we wish to retain a helicopter building capacity in this country, as I believe we must, there must be a regular ordering programme for helicopters. If not, we shall no longer have that capacity. We must make up our minds. I know that at times there are disagreements within and between the services about how we should seek to perform that role, but I believe that the time for a decision must soon be with us.

The Air Force provides mobility and flexibility today, as it always has. Air mobility is likely to be more, rather than less, important in the future when, inevitably we shall see fewer soldiers on the ground. The need for speed, flexibility and ability to respond quickly and over distance will be essential. In the RAF we have the necessary qualities.

It is a wise man who could tell the future in Europe in the light of the changes in the past year. Who could have foretold at the time of the previous RAF debate the position in eastern Europe today? This is the first occasion on which we have debated the RAF since the momentous changes in the Warsaw pact. It would be unwise to assume that stability will be with us in the future and that we shall not need to maintain our defences. In the 50th anniversary year of the Battle of Britain, it is only right to remind ourselves that it is absolutely essential to maintain the air defence shield so admirably provided for us by the Royal Air Force.

6.11 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As a Scottish Member, I begin by paying tribute to the search and rescue sections of the RAF. Increasingly, our fellow citizens seem to be persuaded to go on hills and mountains at times and in weather conditions when they are asked not to do so. They risk not only their lives but those of the extremely skilful and courageous helicopter crews who are asked and never fail at least to try to rescue them.

I do not know what can be done because it is a difficult matter, but surely some minor sanctions should be exercised against those who risk other people's lives as well as their own. The time has come do something about it. It is not right that the lives of helicopter crews should be put in jeopardy by those who take decisions that they are asked not to take.

I interrupted the Minister earlier on the question of the conversion of GR5 to GR7. I do not know the details of it, but he does. What some of us do know is that conversions have often turned out to be much more technically complex and, therefore, expensive, than is generally assumed. Is the Minister convinced that it is a realistic conversion? He may be persuasive about it and may say that there are no problems, but I should like to know, in the light of the Spey conversions and much that has taken place in the past, whether it makes sense.

My next questions are about the Tornado, which was touched on by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). First, is the SRAM-T insertion, technically feasible? Secondly, what is the strategy behind it? Given the changed conditions, it should be subject to reconsideration. I repeat the question of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. It is an important one, about which some of us were thinking before the RAF debate began. Do we really need 250 Tornado aircraft? In the light of political events in the past six months, has there been any reconsideration? I ask a precise question. Has it at least been reconsidered?

Last Friday, at the request of the Minister's former colleague, Christopher Tugendhat, the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, I visited Edinburgh airport and RAF Turnhouse. During discussions, certain skill shortages faced by the CAA were raised. I was told that hitherto the CAA had relied on ex-RAF personnel because they had the skills needed for not only air traffic control but many other skilled jobs in the CAA and in British Airways and other airlines. Is the Minister convinced that sufficient help is given to those who want to transfer their skills from the forces to civil flying? I had always thought that the RAF was good about transfers, but the impression that I formed in that setting, talking to people who knew about the matter, was that it was not quite so easy to transfer these days, financially or otherwise.

I had the good fortune to visit RAF Belize some years ago and I was impressed by the work that the RAF did there. The matter that I raise today is a little different. There are two urgent problems. One is control of drug smuggling and the other is control of the rain forests in certain areas. The problem can be described in the words of the Brazilian Minister for the north, Fernando Cesar Mosquita, who, sitting in his office, said to me, "If anyone creates an airstrip in your constituency, you know about it whereas I do not." The attitude in Brasilia is that if the rain forest is a world problem, the world should help. One of the ways of helping is to provide not only fire-fighting equipment but skilled helicopter crews and equipment. However much good will Governments may show, they cannot do much about the forest unless they have the equipment to do so. Has any thought been given to Governments in rain forest areas who request help from the RAF?

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

My penultimate question is on women in the RAF. Hon. Members who speak from personal experience must be careful that their experience is not many years out of date. Frankly, mine is. I did national service in a tank crew. During all that time in the Rhineland Army, I should not have cared for women tank crew members. Some of us are unhappy, to put it mildly, about recent events involving naval wives. Some of us believe that naval wives have a point. It is not clear what evidence the Ministry of Defence has about women operating in—heaven help us—battle conditions. The same applies in the RAF. In the context of the RAF, one has to assume, whether one likes it or not, the possibility of action.

The questions put by the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and by me were perfectly valid. My question is simple. I am not jumping to conclusions; I am open to persuasion. What evidence has the Ministry had from the air staff? The air staff must have taken a view on the matter. To put it bluntly, the announcements have been pretty casual. There was not a cheep about it with regard to the Navy until ten minutes to ten the other night. The Minister was a little offhand about the announcement on women in the RAF. It is a departure from previous practice. It could be justified and some of my hon. Friends may be in favour of it, but I repeat my question: what advice has been given to the Ministry of Defence from medical sources and air staff about the feasibility of what it suggests? Until the hon. Member for Newbury asked that direct question, it was not at all clear to me—perhaps the Minister and the House will forgive me if I have got the wrong end of the stick—that some kind of role in any possible action was involved——

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has been looking at the newspaper reports of the United States experience in Panama. Will he ask the Minister what cognisance he has taken of that, and what contact the Ministry is having with the United States military authorities on the issue of how women perform in combat?

Mr. Dalyell: That is what is called a yorker in cricket. However, I am alarmed by the decision and—although I was hesitant to say so—I am alarmed also by the American experience. We are on delicate ground here. I understand that the figure of 35 per cent. pregnancies in the first year was given. If one talks to the American forces, one realises that they are less than happy about that. Perhaps we live in a different age, but there are some very angry people, one or two of whom are in my constituency, at Rosyth. The naval wives deserve some answer.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman is old enough to remember the ladies who flew in the war in the Air Transport Auxiliary. There is no reason why a woman should not fly an aeroplane as effectively as a man. The question that the hon. Gentleman wants answering is, are they ever likely to be put into combat? The answer has been stated clearly—they are not.

Mr. Dalyell: I am on political and other thin ice here, so I shall skate off it quickly. However, the question that one is entitled to ask is, what technical advice—medical and from the air staff—has the Ministry of Defence taken? The House is entitled to know.

The Minister will be grateful to know that I come to my last question. It relates to page 2 of *The Times* on Monday. Under the heading "Officials study spy-pay claim", the article stated:

"A bizarre allegation that MI5 has been using Premium Bond cheques, supposedly issued by Ernie, the electronic 'lottery' machine run by National Savings, for paying freelance agents, is being examined by the Cabinet Office, it was disclosed yesterday."

Is it really being examined by the Cabinet Office? The article continued:

"The claims first came to light when a constituent of a senior Conservative back-bencher approached his MP and alleged that Ernie did more than just select prize-winners each month.

He said Ernie's address at Lytham St. Annes, in Lancashire, was being used as a front by the Security Service.

The man claimed that when freelance operatives—often referred to as 'cut-outs' because their undercover work cannot be traced back to MI5—were employed, their pay cheques came in the guise of a prize-winning, tax-free Premium Bond payment."

Lucky them. The article continued:

"There was no suggestion that real Premium Bond prize money had been used.

The constituent claimed he had been paid a substantial sum for working for MI5 and produced a letter from an official at Ernie's office, dated 1981, informing him that he had won a Premium Bond prize.

The bond number was checked and found to be genuine.

Last week the letter was handed over to Cabinet Office officials who agreed to take the matter further.

One official was said to have suggested that the letter could be a forgery. The constituent had been involved in a celebrated court case several years ago and there had never been any previous suggestion that he had worked for the Security Service.

Ernie—Electronic Random Number Indicator Equipment—is the nearest thing in Britain to a national lottery.

Since the first draw in June 1957 more than 30 million cheques, worth about £2 billion, have been sent out to prizewinners. The largest monthly prize is £250,000 and about £5 million remains unclaimed.

Ernie which is now on its third model, takes 75 minutes to select the monthly winners from the 24 million owners of Premium Bonds. Results are published in national newspapers."

My last question is, did the Cabinet Office really spend its time considering this matter? Why did a newspaper such as *The Times* decide to put that story on page 2? Was it all fiction or is there a grain of truth in it?

Normally, whatever other hon. Members criticise me for, it is not for my parliamentary manners. Normally I sit through a debate, having spoken, but a long time ago I promised to uphold the honour of this House against the House of Lords in a chess match at the Athenaeum——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Very good idea.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall doubtless have won my two chess games against the other place, but I promise, either in defeat or in victory, to return to hear the Minister's reply.

6.25 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In a characteristically generous mood, at the beginning of his speech my hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), congratulated my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on his appointment as honorary Air Commodore of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force——

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) is the honorary Inspector General.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries was formerly the honorary Air Commodore of the Highlands squadron—and probably still is—but now he is assuming what was the four-star mantle of Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough and becoming the honorary Inspector General of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. I am sure that the whole House was gratified by that news, aware as we are that my hon. and gallant Friend is no armchair warrior. Following world war two service, he was awarded the air efficiency award for his service as a pilot with the city of Edinburgh squadron, No. 603, of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. I undertake to award to my hon. and gallant Friend the PE award—the parliamentary efficiency award—if, after due service as honorary Inspector General of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, he can get the Royal Auxiliary Air Force squadrons flying again.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State made a fitting speech for a renowned military historian. Long before I knew that my hon. Friend was to be a politician, I read his book on aces in the first world war, and his book on Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union that was undertaken by the Wehrmacht. My hon. Friend made us look back to the battle of Britain and suggested that it was a close-run thing. He said that he hoped that never again would we face such a close call. I submit that in the battle of Britain the tide was turned not only by the gallant Poles who came in in early September, and flung themselves into the battle from RAF Northolt, which is in my constituency, without ever having been declared operational by Air Marshal Keith Park, but because one third of the crews involved in the battle of Britain were Royal Auxiliary Air Force personnel. Without them, the battle could not have been won.

In an interesting speech, containing good news about the order of the T-10 training variant of the Harrier, my hon. Friend the Minister of State said little about strategy. He did not even vouchsafe so much as a single surmise about the strategic implications for the Royal Air Force of the changes taking place in central and eastern Europe at present.

If I may indulge myself briefly, I should like to speculate a little. It must be our earnest endeavour, by the process of arms control and diplomacy, to seek to eliminate the Soviet armed forces, including, of course, the Soviet air forces, from the territory of what is now the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. If we can do so, we shall ensure much greater security for ourselves in the West. But in that process, which will encompass the real possibility of the unification of the two German states, it is hard to foresee that, for very much longer, Soviet forces, including air forces, will be stationed in what would be the eastern part of the united Germany, or that foreign troops, including British troops and Royal Air Force Germany, will be stationed in what is now the Federal Republic.

The logic of events—this is something for which we must hope—is that there will be a demilitarised Germany, certainly a Germany in which no foreign troops are stationed, and no foreign air forces based. That need not mean that Germany will be any less reliable as a NATO partner. Denmark and Norway do not have foreign troops of NATO stationed on their soil in time of peace. Of course, they have the facilities and the infrastructure for reinforcement, and reinforcement is conducted regularly in exercises by the NATO allies.

I hope that the air staff, among all the scenarios, is at present looking at the possibility of questioning, at some time in the not-too-distant future, the Brussels treaty commitment to station an army of 55,000 men and a tactical air force on the soil of continental Europe—in Germany. Just before the end of last year I inquired of Her Majesty's Government whether the Brussels treaty commitment was under review. I was told, significantly, that it was. That is a very new development.

We could, and should, spell out with some clarity the basic strategic dispositions that will ensue from the changing scene in central and eastern Europe and the process of arms control in which we are engaged. First, it is likely that there will be a premium on the capacity to reinforce, rather than on in-place formations, on the central front. Secondly, there will be a premium on the need for reserves rather than regular forces. The number of regular forces in place is likely to diminish, but we shall need a capacity to reinforce and to expand. Thirdly, there will be a need for reach and/or range. I have suggested a process of arms control which, I hope, would lead to the elimination of Soviet air forces and Soviet ground troops from central Europe. The Soviets still possess formidable air forces with great capability, and we ought to be able to reach far and fast over extended ranges. The quality of air power is a supreme consideration. It is a quality applicable not just to the central front but, of course, to out-of-area operations. In this uncertain world—I am thinking of the middle east, Iran, and so on—there are areas to which we may have to address our military attention in the future to secure our basic national interests.

Having looked at strategy, I want to consider the consequences for the composition of our Air Force. First, there will be an even greater need for flexibility—the basic, fundamental, inherent ingredient of air power itself. Secondly, as there will be fewer forces in place, we shall need to be able to concentrate force and fire power rapidly at the decisive point. Fire power will be at a premium. So will force multipliers—tankers, so far as material is concerned; auxiliaries and reservists, so far as personnel are concerned. In short, we shall probably need a rather smaller Air Force, but one of higher quality and enhanced capability. Certainly there is no case whatever for eliminating the European fighter aircraft from our long-term costings and our future plans.

I should like to consider briefly how withdrawal of Royal Air Force Germany, if eventually it takes place—and, if so, it will be a gradual operation, I am sure—will affect our front line. There are seven Tornado GR1 squadrons and one recce squadron in Germany at present. It must be assumed that they will be brought back and based in the United Kingdom. The existing bases could be maintained for reinforcement and redeployment in time of tension or war if required by our German NATO allies, or if those allies chose just to be members of the Brussels treaty organisation or WEU allies. I think that in the redeployment back to the United Kingdom there will be an opportunity to replace the two Buccaneer maritime attack squadrons with Tornadoes—an overdue replacement and, I think, a sensible one. Secondly, we shall not need to police the air corridors to Berlin. It must be presumed that, following German unification, the four guarantor powers

[Mr. Wilkinson]

will accede to redesignation of Berlin as a fully German city. There would then no longer be a need to police the air corridors, so the two Phantom interceptor squadrons in Royal Air Force Germany—No. 19 squadron and No. 92 squadron—would be redeployed back to the United Kingdom. That would be a good opportunity to eliminate the Phantom, which is getting rather long in the tooth, from our air defence forces altogether, to get the F2s and F3s, which are in store in St. Athan, and to rationalise purely on the basis of a Tornado air defence variant force for the No. 11 group air defence task.

With so many Tornadoes coming back from Germany, one must wonder whether it would be rational or good economics to equip the two United Kingdom Jaguar squadrons—No. 41 recce squadron and No. 56 defensive support squadron—with the Jaguar. Perhaps it would be more appropriate for them to be re-equipped with the Tornado. As for the Harrier squadrons—Nos. 3 and 4 at Gütersloh—they would probably come back, too. I am sure that it will be suggested that, in those circumstances, there would be basing problems in the United Kingdom. I do not believe that to be the case. The announcement by Defence Secretary Chaney that the United States is to relinquish certain bases—Fairford, Greenham Common, Weathersfield, and so on—suggests to me that there are sufficient bases in the United Kingdom. There would, of course, be a dramatic foreign exchange saving to the Treasury as a result of such redeployment.

Last but not least, in the modernisation of the Air Force to make it a service with a flexible structure that will enable it to endure into the next century, there is a very real need for reserves. At present, many highly qualified aircrew and ground crew are lost to the service as a result of premature, voluntary retirement, at great cost to the taxpayer. For example, we have to make up numbers by recruiting women into categories other than the normal ones. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), I know that women will be fully capable pilots; of that there is no doubt. None the less we need to prevent that haemorrhage of talent. If auxiliary flying squadrons were in operation, they would ensure the economic use of skills currently going to waste.

There are a number of roles that auxiliary squadrons could undertake. First, the United States Air Force is giving up its aggressor squadron at RAF Bentwaters, which is currently equipped with the F16. The Auxiliary Air Force could have an aggressor squadron to practise air combat, probably using the single-seat version of the Hawk, the Hawk 200. Secondly, because we may need to reinforce Germany—that possibility will still exist—and because our main anti-armour component will be air power rather than tanks on the ground, I suggest that a wing of Hawk aircraft, optimised for air-to-ground operations, be constituted for the purpose. Thirdly, I believe that the communications squadron at RAF Northolt could be an auxiliary one manned by personnel who fly airliners or executive jets. Fourthly, there is a need for a cheaper maritime patrol aeroplane to supplement the Nimrods for inshore maritime work. Fifthly, there is a great deficiency of helicopter lift—many hon. Members have already spoken about that—and the old idea of equipping one or two auxiliary squadrons with Wessex until a more appropriate aeroplane comes into service to provide lift for the Territorials should be dusted down, re-examined and taken up. Last but not least, in the future, there will be a premium on air mobility, in the broadest sense, and air transport.

The Royal Air Force will continue to suffer a grave deficiency if it does not have a heavy-lift capability to fly helicopters, for example, to trouble spots or to transport armoured vehicles and so on. Heavy Lift Cargo Airlines has suggested to the MOD that that airline, in its entirety and with its crews, should become an auxiliary squadron of the RAF at no capital cost to the Ministry. That is a most imaginative concept, which I broadly support.

I hope that the Government will seize the opportunities of the hour for some imaginative forward thinking to modernise our Air Force and to adapt it to the changing scene in central and eastern Europe.

6.42 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I want to follow the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) in what I can only say was an extremely good speech. I agreed with much of it, and he is obviously exceedingly knowledgeable on these matters. The hon. Gentleman is realistic about the situation in eastern Europe and its consequences for Britain's contribution to NATO.

I want to refer to the low-flying programme of the Royal Air Force. I have raised this matter on many occasions over the years, but I do so tonight in a different light—not so much from the basis of constituency complaints, as of following the arguments deployed by the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood and their consequences for Britain's low-flying programme.

Following a major incident one and a half years ago outside Keswick, the town where I live in the Lake District, I asked the National Audit Office to set up an inquiry into the cost-effectiveness and value for money considerations of the low-flying programme. That inquiry was followed six months later by an inquiry by the Select Committee on Defence on similar matters.

The National Audit Office report was published some weeks ago and we had the pleasure of being able to examine that report and to take evidence on it from senior officials of the Ministry of Defence only last week. Although Sir Michael Quinlan was unable to answer many of my questions, I should like him to know that I hold him in great respect, as I regard him as one of Britain's great civil servants. When he has the opportunity to reply to those questions that he was unable to answer orally during our hearing, I hope that he will do so in some detail, because the public want answers to them. Sir Michael was unable to answer a number of questions relating to the developments in eastern Europe.

Tonight I want to place a question mark over the whole justification for the RAF's low-flying programme. Why do we need that programme now? To establish that need, I can do little more than refer to what was said in the National Audit Office report, when it referred to "NATO's forward defence strategy" when defining the requirement for the programme.

I also want to refer to a number of letters that I have received from Ministers in the past 10 years, in particular a letter of 26 August 1987 which stated, in justifying the programme:

"In the event of an attack on this country or on our allies, our pilots must be ready to retaliate against targets deep in enemy territory."

The operative words are "deep in enemy territory".

Another letter of 3 November 1987 stated:

"I would only say that military experts remain convinced that high speed flight still offers the best chance of evading radar and defence systems to attack targets deep in enemy territory."

Another letter of 19 December 1987 was a reply from a Minister about many of the complaints that have come through my office over the years. It stated:

"Low level, high speed flight still offers the best chance of evading radar and defence systems to attack targets deep in enemy territory."

What is meant by "deep in enemy territory"? That phrase is turned out so liberally from the MOD word processors when replying to the many thousands of complaints received annually.

In a letter of 4 February 1983, the then Minister said:

"In a more settled world, of course, there would be less need for the flying, but it is no secret that the Soviet Union and its allies have greatly increased their military strength in the past few years and are a potential threat to Western Europe."

Mr. Alan Clark: Who wrote it?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It was written by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin).

Mr. Clark: That was 10 years ago.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Well, that may be so, but that letter defines the justification for the low-flying training programme.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Although potential targets and potential enemy territory will change from time to time, particularly because of developments in eastern Europe, does the hon. Gentleman agree that, during the Falklands conflict, there was a clear need for aircraft to fly extremely low beneath the Argentine radar? During that conflict, our aircraft flew over enemy territory at extremely low levels because of the experience and training gained in this country.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct, but the problem is that it is costing us nigh on £4 million to maintain that programme. Not that many jets were used in the Falklands campaign; if the hon. Gentleman examines the information, he will find that no more than a dozen jets were used at any particular time. The hon. Gentleman's argument is no justification for the scale and nature of the programme currently in place.

Who are the "deep in enemy territory" nations to which reference has been made? They are Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany and Hungary, along with the part of the Soviet Union which is called Byelorussia. I think "Byelo" is the Russian for white; it is the area of the Soviet Union referred to as White Russia. Those parts of eastern Europe have all been subject to political change. Let us establish what the change has been.

Let us take Hungary. Hungary is currently ruled by a Government drawn from the Hungarian Socialist party, the reformist successor to the old Communist party. However, that is merely a caretaker operation pending elections on 25 March which the Socialist party is unlikely to win. Hungary has arrived at that stage by a series of dramatic but peaceful transformations. To date, the USSR seems remarkably relaxed about the changes in Hungary, and individual spokesmen suggest that some form of neutrality might be acceptable in due course.

There seems to be surprising unanimity between the main political parties about Hungary's international status and alliances. In January, the National Assembly voted for the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. Negotiations to that end are well advanced. On 20 February, Gyula Horn, the Foreign Minister said that he would not rule out the possibility of Hungary joining NATO in the long term. Later he clarified his statement by saying that he envisaged Hungary belonging to NATO and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Alan Clark: I mean well; I hope to help the hon. Gentleman accelerate the pace of his speech. At least he can miss out this bit. There is no training in the Royal Air Force to attack targets in Hungary, from high or low altitude.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When Ministers were writing those letters, the reference to eastern Europe and its allies was repeated; it appears in letters as late as one and a half years ago. That has been the position which has been put consistently by Ministers over the years. That is what the word processor keeps churning out. Perhaps they should change the programme.

Mr. Rogers: Like my hon. Friend, I am surprised by the Minister's response. I thought that the pilots were being trained to attack countries in the Warsaw pact, and that Hungary was a member of the Warsaw pact. If they are not being trained to attack Hungary, I do not know what the target is. Are there any other Hungaries about?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps I may refer to countries other than Hungary. Let us take Czechoslovakia. It has undergone dramatic upheavals since November 1989. These followed similar upheavals in the German Democratic Republic and stemmed from the realisation that the unpopular and illegitimate Communist regime, installed in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of 1968, no longer enjoyed Soviet backing. Elections are scheduled for 8 June this year. President Havel has already visited Berlin, Bonn, Warsaw, Washington and Moscow. In Moscow, he signed an agreement on the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops by July 1991. Is Czechoslovakia the target? Is it one of the nations which is situated deep in enemy territory?

Let us take the next one, the German Democratic Republic. Future security arrangements for eastern Germany are being hotly debated in the run-up to the elections on 18 March. Is not it strange that elections are about to take place in all these countries? They are all negotiating the withdrawal of troops; they all want the troops returned to the Soviet Union.

The Federal German Republic will have elections on 2 December. The most likely outcome is that a united Germany will belong to the political part of NATO. Germany might not remain in the integrated military structure of NATO. France has been outside the military structure since 1966, so there is a precedent. Germany will probably remain within the Western European Union.

The preferred solution for eastern Germany is that proposed by Foreign Minister Genscher—that the present territory of the German Democratic Republic will have a special treaty governing military status under which the

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

Soviet forces will be allowed to remain, and German and other NATO forces will not be introduced. But negotiations are going on all the time about the removal of Soviet forces.

Indeed, I understand that the position in eastern Germany is so bad that today the *Evening Standard* wrote this article about a country which is deep in enemy territory and for which we should have such fear and tribulation:

"East German's armed forces, the pride of the Warsaw Pact until just a few months ago, are falling apart as men desert in their thousands and discipline collapses, say NATO sources.

'The East German army has stopped functioning as a military machine', said a senior NATO official with access to intelligence reports. 'It is amazing—unlike anything else in eastern Europe.'

The Western alliance estimates that the National People's Army, which had 173,000 men until the Berlin Wall came down last November, has now shrunk by almost half to 90,000.

'Soldiers are simply not turning up for work, some have emigrated to the West, others have gone to take jobs elsewhere. A lot of them feel the army is useless. That famous German discipline has gone', another source said.

Last week a battalion of East German soldiers refused to take part in an excercise led by some of the 380,000 Soviet troops still based in East Germany, the source said."

Of course, those too are the subject of withdrawal negotiations.

Mr. Allason: Whatever the status of the so-called eastern bloc countries, is not the hon. Gentleman aware that agreement was recently reached within the United States to allow 195,000 Soviet troops to be based in Europe?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Negotiations may have taken place, based on the historic positions in conflict of the parties, but things are happening every week, every day. There will be developments prior to the elections in all the countries to which I have referred. It is clear that major changes are taking place. All I am arguing is that "deep in enemy territory" can no longer include countries such as those that I have mentioned.

I have not referred to Poland, but it is in the same position. Discussions are taking place about the withdrawal of Soviet troops. There are matters outstanding with East Germany, but they will resolve with the passage of time, and there will be a reduction in tension in eastern Europe.

Let us look further. What is beyond the boundary of eastern Europe? We have Latvia, Lithuania, Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Moldavia. Most of those areas of the USSR are themselves the subject of democratic change. That is what the argument is about on the other side of the Urals. Indeed, elections have just taken place in Lithuania and elections are due in Moldavia. In the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, the Ukraine and Byelorussia, elections are taking place in three months. In Latvia and Estonia, there will be elections on 18 March. All these elections are against the background of the nationalist movements developing in those countries, most of which are opposed to further domination of their political systems by the Communist party. They want change based on the western model of applied democracy.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we are witnessing rapid political change and enormous political instability. Would he care to cast his mind back to where we started, the 50th anniversary of the battle of Britain? Will he reflect on how long it took Hitler to emerge from political instability to a position in which he threatened Europe? How many years did that take?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the clock will suddenly turn back——

Mr. Walker: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps I misunderstood the implication of the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

I have dealt with what I believe to be the major changes in eastern Europe and in those satellite regions that form part of the USSR.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead) *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry, but I must press ahead.

I have a map of the area to which I am referring. There is the old iron curtain, there is the boundary of the existing——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman's remarks must be comprehensible for the *Hansard* reporters. He must describe exactly what he is doing so that it can be written down.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall do precisely that. This map shows the iron curtain, the boundary between the states that form part of the western USSR and that area of eastern Europe that includes Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania. The significance of this map is that it shows also the operational ranges of the Tornado and Harrier jets that are currently deployed on three bases in western Europe—Bruggen, Gutersloh and Laarbruck. One of those bases has a Harrier squadron and the other two have Tornado squadrons.

Taking the maximum operational range—without mid-air refuelling—based on an average load-bearing Tornado, and making a kilometre calculation from the bases where those aircraft are deployed, they only just cross the border from Poland, Czechoslovakia and eastern Germany into the Soviet Union. Their ranges are geared to operate in an area that is now the subject of political change. Most of the operational potential for those aircraft has been offset by the changes in eastern Europe.

The Tornado cannot even penetrate more than 120 km inside the Soviet Union when it is operating on maximum range. It cannot even reach industrial cities in the west of the Soviet Union, because it is built to deal with a problem deep in enemy territory in the satellite states in eastern Europe. Much of its operational capability and role is now defunct because of the changes.

I am not saying that it should be withdrawn tomorrow. I understand that there is some question whether the changes in eastern Europe are long term, or whether there is the possibility of a reverse. My view is that there is not, but there are varying views. All I am asking is that Ministers take that matter into account. If the political conditions are changing, there must be some Government response, especially if the role and capability of the Tornado is interfered with by those changes.

Sir Alan Glyn: The hon. Gentleman was correct when he said that there have been enormous changes in eastern Europe. He has correctly outlined them, and none of us disputes that. However, all those countries would have been unreliable allies to the Soviets. We are now faced with a much shorter Soviet frontier. Therefore, as the hon. Gentleman says, we need different types of weapon. One of those weapons is the atomic deterrent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that the Soviet Union is deperate to cut defence expenditure. It cannot build a modern economy while such a high percentage of its GDP is spent on its defence efforts. It desperately wants changes. Western Europe must recognise that reality and respond accordingly, so that the Soviet Union can convince its public opinion and military institutions, which will probably resist a reduction in internal defence expenditure, that it is justified.

Unless western Europe recognises its responsibility to respond and so enable the Soviet Government, especially President Gorbachev, to sell the principle of reducing expenditure, it will fail in its historic duty. We must not speak that language, because changes are happening. I am saying not that we should unilaterally give up everything —on the contrary—but that we must take everything into account and not take an entrenched position on areas such as low flying and Tornado training just because, historically, pilots have been in a strong position to demand and secure what they wanted.

I shall now deal with aircraft losses. Information is published in America that sets out the truth, which British Ministers have always refused to accept, about the attrition rates for Tornado, Jaguar and other fast jets used by the RAF. I want to know the answer to a simple question that I asked the Select Committee on Public Accounts last week. Why is it that, in 1979, the major accident rate, which includes aircraft losses, per 10,000 hours—as referred to by the Minister in his opening speech —was twice as high in the RAF as it was in the United States air force?

The figure was 1·49 fast jets lost by the RAF and 0·74 by the United States air force. In 1980, why was the figure 1·13 for the RAF and 0·51 for the United States air force —two and a quarter times higher? Why was it two and a half times as high in 1981—1·28 compared with 0·48—and in 1982 two and a third times as high—1·22 compared with 0·52? I am sorry to relate all those statistics, but they should be put on the record. They are published in the United States of America and they should be published in the United Kingdom.

In 1983 the RAF figure was three times as high—1·25 compared with 0·40; in 1984 it was two and a third times as high —0·86 compared with 0·37; in 1985, it was 0·73 compared with 0·29—two and a half times as high. In 1986 we had a good year as the figure was 0·58 compared with 0·33—one and three quarter times as high; in 1987, figures were 0·84 compared with 0·33—two and half times as high. The Minister said that last year's figure was 0·81——

Mr. Alan Clark: The figure was 0·31.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry; I thought the Minister said 0·81. Perhaps we had a better year last year. However, what is coming next year? The pattern of the past has repeatedly been that we lose, or have major accidents involving, far more fast jets than does the United States of America. That includes not only low flying, but flying at all altitudes in fast jets.

If we try to identify low flying, what happens? We are not given the figures, because figures relating to low flying are not published. The Ministry of Defence uses all sorts of answers to try to justify the fact that we cannot have statistics relating to low flying, whereas in Germany the figures are published. Why, in many of those years, were the number of Tornadoes lost—one type of aircraft—twice as high per 10,000 hours in the United Kingdom, with RAF pilots, as in Germany with Luftwaffe pilots? Are the Germans safer fliers? Those are the same aircraft, and the same basis of calculation has been used.

These matters are of great importance because, to some extent, they show that there is something about the British low-flying programme, or the use of Tornado generally, that might make low-flying more dangerous in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall give way in a moment.

It may be that we are the only country in western Europe that allows low flying down to 100 ft. I wonder if that is it? I wonder if the NATO agreement that we have, whereby we carry out low flying to 100 ft puts our pilots at greater risk.

Mr. Walker: I do not have the benefit of the hon. Gentleman's piece of paper with the statistics. Will he confirm that those statistics cover all fast jet operations in the United States, including the United States navy and the United States marine corps? The United States marine corps flies low and fast, and has more aircraft than the Royal Air Force has in total. Therefore, if those flights are included in the statistics, that would certainly change the figures enormously.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am comparing like with like.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is not.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman says that I am not, but I know what statistics I have here. I am comparing like with like.

I shall now consider Tornadoes, in comparison with F111s. In 1986, not one F111 aircraft—I understand that in terms of role and capability, the F111 is similar to the Tornado—was lost anywhere on earth. Let us imagine the scale of the United States operations and the use of F111 aircraft and consider that not one was lost.

I understand that the F111 is a safe aircraft, yet over a period of years we have lost 22 Tornado aircraft in this country. The figures vary depending on what extent of damage is regarded as a write-off. There was a story in the national press last year of Tornadoes being holed up in some garage or hangar at a national airport, for whatever reason.

Mr. Rogers: I shall confirm for the record what my hon. Friend said about the aircraft being stored in a garage. In a report, the Select Committee on Defence expressed great concern about the fact that there were 32 Tornadoes in storage in a hangar at RAF St. Athan. The total worth of those 32 Tornadoes was more than £500 million and it was costing £60,000 a year to keep them in storage.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am glad that my hon. Friend is able to confirm that report. I was obviously telling the story as it is.

It is always significant in a debate in the House when a large number of hon. Members rise to intervene. It may be that I have provoked them to think about these matters tonight. I hope that they will chkeck the figures that I have given and the figures that will inevitably be published in the report of the Public Accounts Committee that will be produced when the evidence that has been taken on the National Audit Office report is published. If those figures are given in full, they will justify what I have said tonight and endorse my case.

I do not want to say what I am about to say, but I shall say it; pilots tell lies. I know that because of an incident that took place on 7 November 1988, about 200 miles to the east of the boundary of Keswick, the town in my constituency where I live. Three people witnessed the incident, which was a near miss. None of those who reported the incident to me knew any of the others who had done so. They all reported the incident independently and from three different positions. The letter that came back from the Minister of Defence said:

"As promised in Roger Freeman's letter to you of 7 November, the points raised by three of your constituents about Tornado aircraft activity near Keswick on 14 September have now been looked into.

I can confirm that no airmiss report has been filed relating to any incident over Keswick that day. As you may know, the pilots would have been obliged to file such a report if either of them had felt that their aircraft had been endangered by the proximity of another. It is however, quite possible that your correspondent saw Tornado aircraft executing a navigational or tactical turn, manoeuvres which involve one aircraft crossing over the track of the lead aircraft. In such a manoeuvre the aircraft would be separated by some 500 feet. I can assure you that these manoeuvres are standard practice in the Royal Air Force. Both pilots would have been well briefed beforehand and would have maintained visual and radio contact throughout. Such turns are in fact carried out in the interests of aircraft safety. I hope this is helpful."

The background to that letter is that the pilots concerned told lies. when they were asked, they said that there had been no air miss. They did not file reports because they knew that that would lead to an inquiry. Two of those three constituents may well not be of my political persuasion and all three are reliable people, not known for hysteria. They are level-headed and know what they saw. Nothing on earth will convince them that it was other than what they said in the statements that they gave to officials.

I know that these air misses happen all the time. I have seen incidents; I live under the flight path of one of these aircraft. As I am not there for most of the week, but only the weekend, I do not see many incidents. However, in the summer months I have seen the aircraft coming down the valley over Keswick. Sometimes they come down very low indeed. People write in and complain, and the Ministry sends out officials, who write reports. We all know that the exercise is a waste of time because the pilot says, "I did not do that," and that goes in the record.

We cannot go on like this, on the basis of a Skyguard system, which I understand is some jacked-up, captured piece of Argentine equipment. Perhaps we are now buying new equipment—I do not know; it did not come out in the Public Accounts Committee the other day. Something must be done to catch these people out. It is not just me who complains; all hon. Members who live in such areas are complaining.

I believe in a low-flying programme where it is necessary and when it is run properly. I object to pilots who tell lies. No doubt they will have the opportunity to read tonight's debate. I hope that those who have told lies know what I am talking about and realise that people strongly object. If three people see something independently and know it happened, we do not expect a pilot to go back and lie to his senior officers, as happened on that occasion.

There are alternative locations in various parts of the world where such low flying could take place. I have had a letter faxed to me today from Canada, from the leader of the New Democratic party, which I understand is an important party in Canadian politics. To some extent the letter undermines my case, but I intend to read part of it out.

The Canadians object—I did not know this till yesterday—to the fact that some of us are advocating more low-flying training taking place overseas, particularly in Canada. It seems that that idea is causing a great deal of anxiety to the populations of certain areas—especially to trappers, whose activities make an important contribution to the economy of certain northern areas.

The letter ends:

"The New Democratic party has appreciated the solidarity and friendship accorded us by the Labour party over the years. We now ask you to consider our position in formulating your policy on low flying in the dramatically changing international arms context."

The letter objects to any possible NATO decision on increasing low-flying activity in Canada. It also refers to an aboriginal group known as the Innu and questions the low-flying programme on the basis that the changes in eastern Europe obviate the necessity of maintaining the present scale of the programme.

7.21 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): If we followed the line of argument advanced by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) we should ignore the very nature of a credible defence policy for the RAF, the Army or the Navy. The whole essence of defence—this debate centres on an effective air defence—is its insurance policy element. An insurance policy should be taken out against all risks, and we hope that when one of those risks is called in, the policy will cover it. If we extended the argument of the hon. Member for Workington, we could talk ourselves out of having any defence at all, saying that we could see no risk for the foreseeable future, so we should remove our defence forces. That is unsound policy.

At a time of great changes we must, when deciding on the role of the RAF, examine some important underlying concepts—for example, those of technological deterrence and operational deterrence. In a rapidly changing world I should not like to predict in what sort of theatre of operations our Air Force may be called upon to perform its tasks. We have heard in the debate that the European theatre may be less important in the foreseeable future, but I can think of out-of-area operations in other parts of the world in which our interests could be threatened and in which the characteristics of aircraft such as the Tornado —it is built in my constituency—with its low-flying capability might be called into play. An effective Air Force must be effective in all the possible roles that it might be called upon to perform.

Mr. Rogers: Would the hon. Gentleman care to mention any area in which the British Air Force is likely to operate—apart from our present out-of-area commitments?

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Oh dear, oh dear.

Mr. Rogers: Is the hon. Gentleman thinking of going back to the colonies, or of raiding another country? Perhaps the commodore of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force could give us some guidance on this?

Mr. Jack: No one could have predicted that we would need to defend our interests in the Falklands; no one could have predicted the need for the Armilla patrol. There are always possibilities that our defence forces will be called upon——

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend recollect that it was the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who decided that we did not need an aircraft carrier squadron in the south Atlantic, and that it was the removal of that deterrent which resulted some years later in the Argentinians invading the Falklands?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for refreshing my memory. The thesis behind an effective Air Force is that it must be effective whatever the demands upon it. Part of our task now, with the conventional forces in Europe talks under way, is to determine the flexible nature and the technology that will be required for our Air Force to meet future demands, seen and unseen.

In my constituency 6,500 people are employed in British Aerospace's military aircraft division. It was refreshing to hear the commitment made by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to the Tornado, to hear his questions about its operational capability, and to hear his commitment to the European fighter aircraft. I hope that those commitments last all the way through the Labour party's policy formulation and that at the next general election it will be able to explain why the party has reversed its policy of trying to run down the defence industry.

The Labour party has talked about some sort of conversion agency. If such an agency came into being not all the objectives that the hon. Member for Rhondda set out in his speech could be achieved, because the agency would undermine the technological base that provided the very weapon systems that he supports. How would he sustain the home-based defence industry without the contribution of its defence exports? In Lancashire we know very well the benefits of, for instance, the Al Yamani project, supplying Tornadoes, Hawks and other systems to Saudi Arabia; but the Labour party made it clear at the last election and thereafter that it would dismantle the overseas sales network for British defence equipment.

At a time when we are—rightly—questioning value for money in European defence, orders for different aircraft systems, some of which will be endorsed by purchase by the RAF, will make the economics of planes such as the Tornado and the EFA come right—at affordable prices, for us and for others. It is very important that the RAF continues to order such planes. I recall the classic example of an American fighter developed by an American aircraft company. The United States Air Force would not buy it, so the plane made no export business.

The hon. Member for Rhondda should also bear in mind the importance of Britain developing its sale of defence equipment worldwide, which helps us to determine defence policy in new theatres of operation. To answer the hon. Member for Workington, sometimes the achievement of such sales is determined by the capability of an aircraft —for instance, in low flying.

Apart from the 16,500-strong British Aerospace work force in defence procurement in the north-west, we also have Rolls-Royce in Barnoldswick and Lucas Aerospace in Burnley. The work forces in those companies are worried about the conventional forces in Europe talks. They are aware of the dramatic developments that have resulted recently in a reduction in the number of combat aircraft to 4,700. As yet it has not been specified which types of aircraft will be involved or what the implications are for future defence procurement, and that causes anxiety.

I contend that there are also opportunities. The CFE talks put a premium on technology—what is left will have to be good. That maxim is certainly mirrored in the Warsaw pact's strategy of developing higher technology planes that pack a bigger punch. We need to know how we shall react to what emerges from the CFE talks.

We must remember that the RAF's strategy in future must be flexible. The achievement of flexibility will largely depend on our ability to develop highly sophisticated technological products, so we need to retain in this country the basic capability to produce such equipment. I was pleased to hear the Minister's commitment to the European fighter aircraft. He is right to say that work on that aircraft is advanced. Five prototypes are currently being worked on in the hangars at Warton.

The need for that plane cannot be overemphasised. The Soviet Union has made it clear that, while it may be reducing the number of aircraft that it has at its disposal, it is generating types that we will find difficult to deal with. Aircraft such as the Blackjack, the Flanker fighters and the Fulcrum are threats that the European fighter aircraft may be called upon to meet. The whole point of having a credible deterrent such as the European fighter aircraft is the hope that it will not have to meet such threats. If we show any weakness and do not proceed with a specific programme, other people could get the wrong idea.

In technology terms the European fighter aircraft is interesting. In real terms it could be argued that the aircraft is cheaper than its previous equivalents. It employs the new technology of carbon fibre in its wing construction and has new forms of mouldings and alloys, all of which contribute to improved serviceability. Those who seek justification for having it will find, for example, that one of the targets is to reduce the amount of time when it is not serviceable. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will tell us when he replies what is happening in terms of the availability of aircraft in relation to maintenance. Can he also give us some idea of the time that will be required to resolve the problems of the European fighter aircraft? It is right that the four nations concerned should look again at the question of radar and reach a conclusion. There are outstanding issues and many of my constituents would like a firm word on those.

I shall now deal with the matter of the delivery of Tornadoes that British Aerospace has on its production line. I am surprised that the Opposition did not reflect on the fact that, in spite of the efforts of the engineering union to mess up production at the British Aerospace plant in Preston, those at Warton in my constituency continued working and there was no disruption in the flow of aircraft

[Mr. Jack]

to RAF and other customers of British Aerospace. Warton can be justly proud of its role in ensuring the continuity of procurement. It distressed me greatly to see the engineering unions pressing the strike to the limit and posing some fundamental questions on their suitability to continue as a source of labour for components for use in British Aerospace's wider activities. It is about time that the Opposition had words with their friends in the trade unions and told them to exercise more responsibility.

Nobody can predict with precision the future role of the RAF. We may see a need to increase maritime air power. What consideration has the Minister given to adapting existing marques or future planes such as the EFA to fulfil a maritime role? There has been some speculation about what comes next. I appreciate that there is considerable public pressure to reduce defence expenditure, but we must not ignore questions such as what comes next. The lead time on modern aircraft is very long. If we are to maintain our technology base and our leading edge on aviation technology in Europe, with the obvious potential spin-offs in the civil field, we must try to give an early indication, commensurate with CFE 1 and CFE 2, to our aircraft industry so that it can plan properly for technology and materials procurement.

The idea that we can all gain immediately from some form of peace dividend worries me. There would be no dividend from what has happened in eastern Europe if we had not been resolute on our defence expenditure and policies. Neutral countries such as Sweden and Switzerland place great emphasis on maintaining a credible air defence system to protect the inviolability of their air space and their national security. Such a strong view by neutral countries must reinforce our stance to place emphasis in the coming years on credible air defence. The European fighter aircraft has an important role to play in that.

7.34 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) made an interesting speech that was informative about the Conservative view. Conservatives argue that defence is about liberty and freedom, but the hon. Gentleman uttered a thinly veiled threat to ban trade unions from defence factories. Effectively, he said that in his speech. He eulogised about arms exports. Arms exports have been expanded enormously and it is little wonder that British and European-made arms were used to kill British soldiers in the Falklands war. Conservatives have pushed ahead fast with arms exports because they are interested only in the money, but they should realise that British troops will be at risk from British arms in future wars.

I apologise to the Minister for missing the early part of his speech. I put it down to a failed attempt to improve my sartorial image. I have been trying to avoid bulging pockets by not carrying keys. Unfortunately, I closed my front door and then found that I did not have the keys in my pocket. I wish that I had had an RAF helicopter to lift me over my neighbour's back wall and into my garden so that I could get into my house.

It is difficult for hon. Members to visit Royal Air Force bases and it can be done only on strictly limited conditions. I tried to do it and was snubbed by the Ministry of Defence. I was told that I could not visit when I wanted to. I have a picture from *Aviation News* magazine of a girl in front of a Hawk. The caption says:

"A bird in the hand . . . Pilot's Pal Kris Jaynes with a No. 151 (Shadow) Squadron Hawk T.Mk.1 make a fine combination for this year's Christmas cover."

It is clear that calendar girls can get into RAF bases. I appreciate that hon. Members are not as popular as calendar girls on visits, but nominally at least we hold the purse strings and if calendar girls can get in surely we can. Will the proceeds from such calendars be given to the Royal Air Force? That would save the taxpayer a few bob because I understand that such calendars make money.

I congratulate the RAF on its disaster relief work and its search and rescue efforts. My experience from meeting RAF officers is that they have an amazingly high technical standard and great expertise. They are immensely efficient. However, one must ask whether the Ministry of Defence is efficient in managing them or is it inefficient, incompetent and wasteful of public money?

I should like to read to the House a long passage that is worth reading from *The Independent* of 22 January. It points to that inefficiency and to the need for a major defence review. That was emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). It also shows that a peace dividend should be comfortably available from cutting our military hardware. That could be used for peaceful purposes such as the National Health Service and civilian jobs in an arms conversion programme. Only the Tories set their face against that. I have seen reports saying that changes in Europe mean that we have to spend more. That is plain stupidity.

The article in *The Independent* is headlined:

"Military budgets 'able to withstand £15 bn cut'."

It says:

"The RAF runs too many airfields, requiring duplication of services and more men than any other western airforce operating a similar number of aircraft. Five or six RAF air bases could be closed, including at least one of the major facilities in West Germany. RAF Germany will probably have to lose two of its 12 combat aircraft squadrons under the CFE treaty. Airpower should be reorganised with at least two of RAF Germany's nine squadrons of Tornado bomber aircraft brought back to Britain to replace elderly Buccaneers . . . the RAF's strength could be cut by about 15,000 men from its current strength of 93,000. These changes could be made with the RAF losing only four of its 28 fast jet squadrons while retaining all its projects for upgrading UK air defences.

Further, the RAF's support helicopter force should be transferred to Army control. Currently, troops ride in helicopters operated by two services, a duplication of effort and something that hinders the development of airmobile tactics, which will become increasingly important as forces in central Europe are thinned out by the CFE accord."

I do not mind whether that is controlled by the Army or by the RAF, but there should not be that duplication. The article also says:

"The RAF's plans to buy a new air-launched anti-tank missile could be cancelled".

That is particularly relevant if the CFE talks result in the scrapping of some of the tanks in central Europe. Another article in *The Independent* on the same day says:

"A comparison of the Royal Air Force with that of Israel shows the difference between an organisation which evolved through the abandonment of empire and one which grew up to meet a specific threat. Each force deploys about 550 combat aircraft but the RAF uses three times as many people to do it. There is only one general in the Israeli air force but there are more than 30 officers of equivalent or higher rank in the RAF . . .

Some military experts also believe that the RAF deploys much of its strength too close to the East German border. The

bulk of the RAF's bomber force, nine squadrons of Tornados, is based in Germany. The Americans base fighters in Germany to protect ground forces, but put most of their bombers in England and elsewhere, to keep them safer from a Warsaw Pact attack."

So it is bad strategy anyway. My hon. Friends the Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Rhondda both mentioned the next point in the article which is:

"The RAF remains pre-occupied with buying aircraft, there being more than 200 of them sitting unused in hangars. This embarrassment of riches provides the visible proof of the RAF's success in pursuading governments that continued purchasing of aircraft is good for the nation's industrial health. While all air forces like to have reserves no other in Nato has such a high proportion of its aircraft gathering dust.

The RAF would have difficulty manning and sustaining these spare aircraft in a conflict. Spending billions of pounds buying aircraft has not helped the service to man this reserve fleet; there are not enough aircrew, even if desk-bound officers are mobilised, to keep the RAF flying around the clock in war. Stockpiles of advanced weapons for use by these aircraft are so low that, in some cases, they would only last a few days."

What a catalogue of mismanagement. That also shows where there is scope to get the peace dividend from the RAF, let alone from the other forces if they are anything like that.

Mr. Jack: I suspect that that article was written by the same journalist who has been writing knocking copy about the European fighter aircraft month after month. Every time he says something, reality proves him wrong.

Mr. Cohen: The points are set out in detail. I have quoted them and it is for the Minister to respond in detail, point by point. Why are those aircraft gathering dust in the hangars? Why has the Ministry been so keen to buy aircraft and leave them in that condition? Let us have the answers.

The CFE talks will result in reductions, and those reductions will have to include combat aircraft. The Prime Minister tried to block that at the outset by saying that no United Kingdom dual-purpose aircraft would be included. That is why there was such a long wrangle over the definition of what aircraft should be included—a wrangle that put at risk the whole deal. On 28 November last year, *The Atlantic News* reported:

"The Prime Minister has expressed doubts about including aircraft in the negotiations"

during her visit to Washington. Despite the Prime Minister, it now looks as if a deal can be reached over, for example, air defence interceptors. That is welcome, although, judging from the reports, too many aircraft will still be left.

The Government have also been less than frank about the future of the United States air bases in the United Kingdom. We are told in press reports—not by the Government—that RAF Molesworth is to be used as a huge spy centre, to be transferred here from Stuttgart by the United States. It will be called a joint analysis centre and will have over 700 staff. That makes Britain a front-line target again.

How many of those spy centres are needed? We already have GCHQ and Fylingdales, and now we are to have Molesworth. Only a little while ago, NATO made a fuss about a Soviet Union spy centre. The Soviet Union has shut down that centre, but we go on expanding and having more and more spy centres.

The Ministry of Defence is still insisting that RAF Greenham Common has only a military future. On 11 January, it announced that it was pushing ahead legally to extinguish all commoners' rights over the land. That is being done under the Defence Act 1854, which went through Parliament in one day as a part of the Crimean war effort. It is ironic that an Act to facilitate a war with Russia is being used because of peace with Russia. The war is against the Newbury residents, and its aim is to take away their common land. The 1854 Parliament was deeply undemocratic and unrepresentative. The Act has none of the appeal or compensation rights that there would be in modern legislation for land acquisition.

Greenham Common is no good anyway because, under the inspection procedures of the INF treaty, it has to be inspected. It is down only as a standby base. It has the Hilton hotel and a new Tesco supermarket close to its western flight path, and on its eastern flight path it has Aldermaston, the nuclear production facility, so there would have to be immense flight restrictions anyway. Greenham Common should be closed down for military purposes and returned to the people of Newbury. That land is the lung of the area.

At RAF Bentwaters in Suffolk, the F15E Strike Eagle nuclear bomber is to be based, with a stand-off nuclear missile that can be launched into the range that is supposedly covered by the INF treaty. Even McDonnell-Douglas, the producer of the F15E, boasts in its advertisements of it breaking the spirit of the INF treaty.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) for obtaining information through a series of written questions, especially as Congress in America has already approved a £12 million base preparation programme with a nuclear element at Bentwaters. RAF Bentwaters is to be the new Greenham Common. Congress has been told about that, but the British Parliament has not been informed.

The same situation applies to the SRAM-T, the new tactical surface-to-air missile. Congress has been told that SRAM-T is to be fitted to the F15E and to the Tornado. The *Congressional Record* reads:

"General Leyland: We will put the SRAM-T on the F15E first, then the F111, then the F16.

Senator Cohen"—

who is not related to me but who is equally inquisitive, then asked:

"Any non-US aircraft?

General Leyland: It is going to go on the Tornado.

Senator Cohen: Tornado?

General Leyland: Yes."

Although that information appears in the *Congressional Record*, we in the British Parliament have not been given it. America is planning to produce 450 TASM—Tornado air-to-surface missiles—and reports say that 160 of them are to be based in the United Kingdom. If that is true, there will be more of those in the United Kingdom than the number of cruise missiles being dismantled under the INF treaty.

In addition, it was confirmed when defence was last the subject at Question Time that the Government are going ahead, with the approval of President Bush, with a new Anglo-French nuclear missile. The whole programme involves updating, modernising and increasing what existed under the cruise programme. So much for Tory claims of disarmament success. Some people in NATO, such as the Tory Government here, are set on continued expansion rather than disarmament. At whom are all the

[Mr. Cohen]

new nukes targeted? Are not those involved in these activities aware of the changed world situation and the potential unravelling of the cold war? Are not they continuing the same old arms race, albeit on only the NATO side?

The truth is that the Tories are frightened of peace. That is why they have already made plans to spend the peace dividend on the next generation of nuclear weapons. If the British public are able fully to appreciate the truth of that, they will resent it and reject the Tory cold war dinosaurs.

7.52 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I assure the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that my hon. Friends and I are determined to retain the peace that we have enjoyed since 1945. Western Europe has been the only part of the planet where forces totally opposed to each other have faced each other for that length of time, yet there has been peace in the area. All the evidence shows that if one can deter, one can enjoy peace.

The hon. Member for Leyton does his cause no good by suggesting that in some way Conservative Members are war mongers. The opposite is true. There are many on the Government Benches, and some on the Opposition Benches—not as many as there used to be—who experienced war. I assure the hon. Gentleman that anyone who has experienced war does not want to see it repeated, and certainly we do not want our children to suffer it. I find offensive the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that we are interested only in war.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said that we wrapped ourselves in the Union Jack. As hon. Members can see, tonight I am not wrapped in the Union Jack. I am wearing the Royal Air Force tartan kilt. I am proud of it and I am proud of the years I spent in the RAF. I am equally proud of the years I have spent in the RAF Volunteer Reserve.

In view of the interest in such matters displayed by Opposition Members, I must declare an interest. I am a serving member of the RAF Volunteer Reserve. I do not pretend, and have never pretended, to be an expert. Last weekend, when I was with the RAF, I was with some real experts. One need only be with experts, in whatever walk of life, to realise how little one knows. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Rhondda said, we do not spend our time living in the past.

My information, from RAF sources, is up to date and, I believe, reliable. In this, the 50th anniversary year of the battle of Britain, it is important for us never to forget that the war was a close-run thing. Never again must we ask the RAF to face such a situation. We have a duty and responsibility to the young men and women who give their service to our country to ensure that we give them the equipment to enable them to deter, and we hope that they will never have to use it in anger.

I welcomed the visit last week of the RAF presentation team to the House. The fact that they were coming appeared often on the all-party Whip, so any hon. Member who was interested in finding the true facts could have attended and put questions to the Chief of Air Staff. Opposition Members who wonder whether the RAF authorities have views on low flying and whether advice is given to pilots on the subject could have talked to the RAF presentation team and questioned the Chief of Air Staff. Those of us who questioned them found that they gave clear and lucid answers.

There is a dramatically changing situation in eastern Europe. We welcome the breakdown of Socialism and Communism. We on the Conservative Benches have always been opposed to Socialism and Communism. Some Opposition Members are rather discomforted because their friends are no longer in office. As I say, we welcome the changes that are taking place.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman does himself no credit by sneering in that way. I reiterate what I said earlier; my hon. Friends and I and people of our background are just as committed, perhaps even more so, to the defence of this country as are Conservative Members. As many people from the mines of south Wales and the factories of Yorkshire and Lancashire as public school boys gave their lives in the last war.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that his party and Lord Halifax held hands with Hitler. His party ran down British forces immediately prior to the last war. The Conservatives consorted with the Nazis and Fascists at that time. So it ill behoves the hon. Gentleman and his Friends to cast slurs on us. Those of us who come from a Christian Socialist background greatly resent his implication that we are Communists. We are not Communists and the Labour party since the war has been opposed to Russia's imperial developments.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman protesteth too much. We are debating the RAF, which has always recruited from all the socio-economic groups in this country. It is important to remember that. The hon. Member for Rhondda should also remember that, like him, I come from a working-class background. His jibes at me went wide of the mark. The Soviet Union, let us remember, is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. I described that regime as being Socialist and I am sure that that is what the Soviet Union believes itself to be.

As we look at the USSR, that massive conglomeration of races and creeds in which the Russians are in a minority, representing fewer than 50 per cent. of the total population, we see the threat that it faces with the growth of Muslim fundamentalism, the impact that that could have on the Soviet Union generally and the possibilities that exist for mischief-making. One is bound to wonder who will have possession of Soviet military hardware in the coming 10 years. The Soviets' nuclear capability is enormous, and their vast, modern, sophisticated air force could well end up in the wrong hands.

We must retain a broad capability. The RAF must be able to expand to meet any threat or need that arises, and in that context I welcome the strong commitment to the European fighter aircraft. We must also consider the possible threat posed by Soviet aircraft such as the Fulcrum, the Foxbat, the Flanker and the Backfire in the hands of nations unfriendly to us, perhaps in the middle east. At some time in the future we may require RAF pilots to fly against such aircraft, for we never know who tomorrow's enemy may be.

We must retain the ability to deploy aircraft rapidly, and we must consider the type of helicopter that should be used in such a role. Although I do not wish to criticise the EH101, which can work for the Navy in its anti-submarine

capacity, I believe that the ideal candidate is the Black Hawk, which can be accommodated in a C 130 Hercules for rapid deployment—with Rolls-Royce engines, of course. In case any hon. Members are worried about the future of Westland, let me remind them that Westland will be manufacturing the Black Hawk. As for search-and-rescue services, I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that the time has come for us to make the replacement of the Wessex by the Sea King a priority; the left-over Wessex aircraft could be allocated to auxiliary duties.

I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) in his place: I probably derived as much pleasure as he from his appointment as Inspector General of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. That is a great honour to bestow on a former volunteer and auxiliary, and Conservative Members, at least, share in it. I am confident that the Royal Auxiliary Air Force is in good hands.

When I was in the United States last year, I visited the United States Marine Corps depot at Cherry Point in North Carolina on the anniversary of the battle of Britain. The corps has more high-class jets than the Royal Air Force, which is why I questioned the statistics given earlier by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The general very kindly sent his communications aircraft to pick me up at Washington, accompanied by two air cadets who were on a visit that I had arranged.

I discovered that both the majors who were flying the aircraft were auxiliaries—US Marine Corps reserve officers putting in their annual commitment. I have talked to former regular RAF officers, now flying with British Airways, Britannia, Dan-Air and British Midland, who are willing to serve in the RAAF or the RAF volunteer reserves; as many are former fast-jet pilots, they would surely be useful if more air crews are needed in future.

There is a world shortage of pilots, both civil and military. I have a long-standing interest in the air cadets, and particularly in the volunteer gliding schools run by them; such schools often give young men and women their first opportunity of learning to fly. Let me place on record my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement—and his predecessor, Lord Trefgarne—for re-equipping the gliding schools with the Grobb 109B, a fine aircraft for such purposes. Some nine airfields now have doubts about their long-term viability, and this may be a good time for us to order more Grobb 109Bs while the production line is still going, at the same fixed-contract price. I compliment the Procurement Executive—which normally receives a good many knocks—on obtaining such a good deal.

There used to be a volunteer gliding school servicing the north-east: it was based at RAF Ouston when that unit was still in existence. I have a particular interest in that unit, because I was the last commanding officer of 641 volunteer gliding school. Sadly, the unit had to close down, because we had lost our home. Now, however, Acklington—a former RAF base that became an opencast coal site—is being restored, and I think that it could be procured for the gliding school. I believe that the price on offer is reasonable.

The RAF will be obtaining substantial sums for other units: the asking price for the Acklington site is a tiny proportion of what it will receive for one of the many sites that it has offered. I hope that the Ministers will not be put off by comments about the site being used only by part-time fliers: that is no way in which to talk about our volunteer gliding schools, which get their staff for nothing and do the job without charging. More important, the unit would be able to run courses during the week, and other units—such as Catterick, which can no longer engage in midweek flying for annual courses—could use it as well.

I should like to place on record my thanks to one individual for what he has done for the air cadet gliding movement. His name is wing commander Jack Alcock and he is due to retire this year. He has done a remarkable job running the central gliding school for the Royal Air Force, and in my view he should be encouraged to extend his service so that he can see through the conversion that will be required to the Grobb 109B.

The Chipmunk and Bulldog have given good service to the Royal Air Force and we should carefully look at them and their replacements. The cost of keeping an aircraft in operation can often be greater than the cost of replacing it and having a massive reduction in running costs. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State that our experience with GRP gliders and motor gliders has given us confidence that they represent the way in which all light aircraft will probably be constructed in future.

I must declare an interest as we seem to be living in an era when there is great interest in my activities. At least certain Opposition Members seem to take great interest in my activities. I visited the factory where the Grobb 109B is made. I must declare that I was entertained there and enjoyed some lovely sausages and various other things and I did not pay for them, but I hope that no one will conclude that I was compromised in any way, as we seem to be entering the realms of stupidity in these matters.

I wish to draw the Minister's attention to the staffing of established units of air cadets and volunteer reserves. The PR flight commanded by wing commander Alex Dickson does a tremendous job, as do all the other flights of the volunteer reserves. As a result of the Taylor report which is now some 30 years old, we adopted a system of appointing retired officers to J-class posts in the operation, running and control of those units. That was done on the basis that it was a less expensive way of staffing those posts. That is no longer relevant. The Conservative party believes in competition and there is enormous competition for highly qualified, capable and able people. We can no longer expect those who retire from the Royal Air Force—and people retire much later than they did 30 years ago—to accept jobs as J-class reserve officers for the salaries that we now offer. I strongly recommend that if we cannot have regular officers in those positions—and I understand why—we should consider using better paid J-class officers so that we can pay people their market worth and get rid of them if they are unsuitable, that is a decided advantage. Alternatively, we could consider using volunteer reserves in the top jobs so that we could get highly motivated people who understand and can carry out the job. My last suggestion is the least expensive; it would cost very little money and circumstances might force us into taking that option.

8.13 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I do not normally speak in defence debates. The last occasion when I spoke about the RAF was during an Adjournment debate on the transfer from RAF Carlisle of the stores ordering facility DDS MI5. That was nearly two years ago and the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) joined me in speaking against the transfer of that facility to Harrogate. Two years on it

[Mr. Eric Martlew]

is clear that what we said in that debate was true. It did not save any money; it decreased efficiency at DDS MI5 and very few of the staff transferred from Carlisle to Harrogate. I should like to ask the Government to change their mind and to transfer the facility back to RAF Carlisle. I very much doubt that they would do that. They did not change their mind about the poll tax, so they are unlikely to do so about an RAF unit.

On 18 May 1989, I wrote to the then Minister, now the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, asking him what was to become of the excellent office facilities at RAF Carlisle. The Minister described them as "excellent"; I would not have used that description. He said that the Ministry of Defence did not want to give up those facilities which I wanted to be made available for other Government Departments, because at the time there was talk of 30,000 jobs being moved out of London. The Minister replied that the MOD reallocation committee was considering the facility at Carlisle, but it would not be possible to say anything for several months. His letter was dated 18 June 1989.

In my book, "several months" does not mean nine months. If the Minister cannot give me a reply tonight, perhaps he will write to me about the office facilities at 14MU Carlisle. Obviously that concerns my constituents, as there are jobs involved.

My constituents are also concerned about low flying over Cumbria. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has already mentioned the problems that exist. I represent the largest urban area for 60 miles in that part of the country, so any low flying over Carlisle disrupts an urban area.

When I was a very new Member of Parliament I went to see a Defence Minister about low flying and I was given an assurance that there would be no low flying below 2,000ft over an urban area. Foolishly, I accepted that assurance. Then I started to receive letters from constituents saying that aircraft had been flying over a particular estate or a certain part of the city. I wrote to the Minister reminding him of the commitment he had given me that there would be no low flying and asking him to take disciplinary action against the pilots concerned.

I received a reply saying, "We are very sorry, but of course your constituent lived a mile and a quarter from the centre of the city." My constituency is about five miles across, so all my constituents live fairly close in. About 10,000 or 20,000 people live in the area. I wrote back and asked the Minister to define an urban area, and of course he would not. So any assurance from the Government that there is no low flying over urban areas is absolute nonsense —unless of course a pilot does a fly past over the town hall, although the Government would still say that it was on the outskirts of the town.

Mr. Rogers: It is interesting that my hon. Friend should ask the Minister to define what the Government mean by an urban area. In last year's debate, the word "conurbation" was used in the context that low flying should not take place over major conurbations. I asked the Minister to define "conurbation" and I remember that the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), said from a sedentary position, "It is a town." But I persisted in asking the Minister to define a conurbation, and of course he could not. When I drew to his attention the incidence of low flying over substantial towns and cities such Swansea and Llanelli in south Wales, the point was brought home to him. My hon. Friend is absolutely right: there is a great deal of low flying over urban areas and conurbations.

Mr. Martlew: I shall give way to the Minister if he wishes to respond to that point.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will respond.

Mr. Martlew: I look forward to the Minister's reply. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that there needs to be a definition, but I am afraid that when I read *Hansard* tomorrow I will not find one.

Pilots will continue to fly low over urban areas of my constituency. My constituents have every right to be worried about that because, in the past 10 years, there have been four collisions between low-flying military aircraft, three of which were within 30 miles of my constituency. That is a minute or two as the Tornado flies. On 18 June 1988, a Jaguar crashed at Keswick, which is 30 miles away; unfortunately, a member of its crew was killed. On 19 August 1988, two Tornadoes crashed, and four aircrew were killed. At the beginning of January, there was a crash on the Carlisle side of Hexham; fortunately, no one was killed.

Aircrews accept that low flying is dangerous, but the Government boast that there have never been any civilian casualties as a result of such crashes. However, it is only a matter of time before there is a major disaster. As the Member of Parliament for Carlisle, I am concerned that that will happen over my constituency.

It is not long since the Lockerbie tragedy. Carlisle is only 25 miles away, and on the same flight path. If the bomb had gone off two minutes earlier, my constituents would have died. My constituents felt that tragedy with the people of Lockerbie. Where possible, we should minimise the risk of aircraft crashing in large urban areas.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman says that low flying is dangerous, but does he agree that it would be much more dangerous to expect Air Force pilots to fly at low levels during times of war when they had not practised during times of peace? Over the past 10 years, the number of fatal accidents has progressively reduced, and we now have the lowest fatality record for many years.

Mr. Martlew: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but he obviously was not present when my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said that our accident record for the past 10 years is two and a half times worse than the Americans', who do the same amount of low flying. Given that record, we should consider improving training and should not be complacent. I detected some complacency in the remarks of the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), but we have nothing to be complacent about.

Over the past 20 months, there have been seven incidents in my constituency of civilian and military aircraft being involved in so-called near misses. That causes my constituents much concern. There seems to be more low flying in my constituency than in Scotland or Wales. The bulk of it seems to be from Northumberland to Cumbria, and I hope that the Minister will say that, because of the relaxation in world tensions, the Government will reduce the amount of low flying, but I fear that they will not do so.

I wish to place on record my concern that the House was misled on 6 February. In a written question, I asked what information the Government had about construction plans for RAF Bentwaters in Suffolk. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces replied that a post office, a conventional weapons facility and a field training facility would be built on that site. The United States' budget proposals, which were printed on 29 January, show that only a post office will be built. There is no mention of the training or ammunition facility. Under a heading of "Overseas Classified", it says that it will build one conventional munitions facility and one field training facility somewhere in Europe.

That facility will be for the F15E bomber. The Americans say that it will be stationed at Bentwaters, but the Government say that that is not true. On 6 February, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) asked whether any decisions had been taken on the F15E, but the Minister of State replied:

"no decisions have yet been taken."—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. 604.]

Either the American Government are building a base on our soil without telling our Government or, more to the point, the Government do not want to admit that that aircraft will be stationed here. The Germans have said that they will not accept it. They know that it is part of a nuclear expansion because it carries the same warheads as cruise missiles. We are sending those warheads back, yet allowing them to return to be used on the F15E bomber.

I hope that the Minister will put the record straight. I attended expecting an announcement on the F15E. If I am incorrect, I am sure that the Minister will delight in telling me so. I presume that, unless he so states, that new nuclear bomber will be based at RAF Bentwaters.

8.27 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Before making a few remarks on the Royal Air Force, I should like to comment briefly on the speech by the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), particularly his remarks on low flying.

I assure the hon. Member for Carlisle that there is no complacency. Statistics show that over the past 10 or 20 years the Royal Air Force's fatal accident total has steadily declined. That shows that complacency does not exist. Although I was not fortunate enough to hear the speech by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), if his statistics on the United States Air Force were based on the speech that he made last year, they are highly dubious. We must be careful about whether we are comparing like with like—whether we are talking about low-flying accidents, total accidents or the number of accidents per 10,000 flying hours. I shall check the hon. Gentleman's statistics in *Hansard* because there are many statistics on those matters. The RAF's record of reducing accidents, particularly low-level accidents, is very good.

This debate is different from previous ones. We now have a different situation in Europe. In many ways, one could argue that it is more unstable because we do not know what the future holds. The threat is less obvious, but it is clearly still there, and because of that it is much harder to determine what the future holds, which equipment the Royal Air Force needs and what training the men who use it need.

The debate offers us an opportunity radically to consider the role that the RAF will fulfil over the next decade. The détente, the reduction in force levels, should allow us to look beyond the parameters that have existed for the past 20, if not 30, years and clearly see the role of the three services. I suggest that, as in the past, air power offers great flexibility because of its mobility and its increasing ability to take large loads great distances and to be available on site before a disturbance occurs. Whatever decisions are made on the future role of the three services, I am convinced that the RAF will play a major role, if not the predominant one.

We need to look outside the NATO theatre. Because the threat is less obvious, the area from which it comes is less obvious. The RAF has a big role to play. The men and women who comprise the personnel in today's RAF are worried about the changes. It is not surprising that morale is not as high as it otherwise would have been. It is important to bear in mind the difficulties of keeping experienced aircrew in the RAF. That is not surprising, given the reduction in unemployment and the priority that is given to people with experience and training in specific skills outside the services. There will be a steady drain of experienced personnel for some time. I hope that it can be stopped, or at least slowed down.

As seems customary at present, I declare an interest in that I am a serving member of the RAF Reserve. My experience is that many people in the service are not fully satisfied with their pay increase this year, and the staging over nine months is of concern. It is interesting to note that, in the past few months, RAF personnel, who have played a commendable role in the ambulance dispute, left to join either the police or the ambulance service. They did so before the recently announced pay rise because they realised that their pay in the ambulance service would be much higher than in the Air Force. Those points show that the pay of the armed forces must be reviewed continually; tremendous work is done by RAF personnel in support of our emergency services.

The application of the community charge or amenity charge, as I think it is called, to people not resident in this country is causing anxiety. It will go into the defence Vote and is considered by many service men to be rather a backhanded way of getting money that the service would not otherwise get. Those problems must be addressed if we are to stem the tide of people leaving the service in future years.

Equally important, the RAF's personnel department must be much sharper in its dealings with individuals, ensuring that they stay in the service and do not leave for a minor reason, simply because the system cannot cope with the needs of the individual as opposed to the wider needs of the service. Obviously, the wider needs of the service must always take priority, but if it is to retain the personnel that it needs, closer attention must be paid to individual needs.

I have a small example, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) dwelt in a small way. Over the past year or two, there has been a change of policy towards instructors in the university air squadrons and the commanding officers of air experience flights. The RAF has attempted to introduce civilian instructors into those posts. One need only look at what happens to see how wrong-minded it was to suggest that. There has been a reduction in the number of pilots in the Air Force because they have left to take better-paid jobs outside, but at the same time we are trying to encourage civilian pilots to join the service and take jobs at a much lower salary than they would be paid outside. Although there were

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many replies to the advertisements in newspapers and many people were interviewed, in the case of air experience flights, five people were offered appointments but, over the three months needed to get their security clearance sorted out, four turned them down and found other jobs in civilian life. The RAF must more closely consider the means of retaining the personnel it already has, rather than come up with schemes which, even on the surface, will not work.

We have spent some time talking about helicopters. The Puma is running into severe fatigue problems and needs to be replaced sooner rather than later. It is important to make a decision, whatever it is. Although the Wessex helicopters of the Queen's flight are superbly maintained, they are quite old and cannot go on for ever fulfilling their present role. I understand that the Tornado ADV F3 has also suffered fatigue problems. I should like an assurance, either tonight or in written form, as to whether that is true and, if so, information on what is being done. It is a relatively new aircraft and, given its cost, it is worrying that fatigue problems seem to be cropping up so soon. I shall not dwell on the Foxhunter radar, which has been discussed at some length. If the taxpayer has to pay out about £17 million for a Tornado, it is vital that the aircraft that the pilots fly is demonstrably better than the aircraft it replaced or, more specifically, the Phantom alongside which it operates. Many reports show that in certain situations the Phantom is as good as, if not better than, the Tornado. That worries me, because I believe that the radar has brought that about. This matter must be sorted out soon. I understand that the new Tornado reconnaissance aircraft in Germany is suffering some teething problems, as do all new aircraft. I hope that the problems associated with the reconnaissance pod will be sorted out quickly, because it forms a vital part of the force's viability in Germany.

On equipment, I should like to mention the airborne warning and control system and the offset agreement. Some years ago, it was decided that the offset would amount to 130 per cent. of the total cost of the aircraft. Over the past year or so, the Ministry of Defence has been silent on those offset purchases and on whether Boeing is meeting its commitment and ensuring that a considerable amount of work is given to firms in this country. I should like to know, either in an answer tonight or in written form, where we are with that offset.

As I said, it is clear that the RAF is going through an interesting time, because the threat in Europe is changing, because there are problems with manpower and because of the equipment programme. As I am reasonably close to what goes on in the RAF, it is clear to me that the personnel are none the less in good heart. In addition, many of them look forward to the opportunity to do something different from what they did in the past and the diverse roles that I mentioned earlier.

8.39 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I am in something of a quandary. We are told that one should declare one's interests being and that the declaration in the document published annually is not sufficient. I have an interest to declare but if I do so I shall be accused of advertising. I am talking of the future of the Air Force and NATO and I am author of Jane's "NATO Handbook". If I am accused of advertising, I apologise but it is incumbent on me to declare that interest. I have no vested interest in the survival of the Alliance for the purpose of writing for Jane's, but I wish to counter some of the arguments that one hears on both sides of the Atlantic and of what was the iron curtain. It is argued that alliances have become superfluous and that their withering away is necessary and should be expedited.

I have always championed British membership of NATO and appreciated its critical role in maintaining our security in difficult international circumstances when our national security was in jeopardy for a considerable number of years. To those who argue that the alliances should disappear, I counsel caution in the immediate future. There will be a major requirement for a bloc-to-bloc dialogue to continue.

If events in eastern and central Europe get out of hand, the Soviet Union will get exceedingly angry and worried. In particular, its generals will be worried because they will perceive the Soviet Union's security interests being jeopardised by the disappearance of its cordon sanitaire and expulsion of its ground and air forces from its former buffer states.

It is not in our interests or those of the Soviet Union to allow the alliances to disappear. I hope that in the short term it is not seen to be in the interests of current members of the Warsaw pact who may not view any future military or other relationship with the Soviet Union as desirable. It is important, at least in the immediate future, that we do all that we can—although it sounds a perverse argument —to sustain the Warsaw pact. It is necessary to do so.

The Warsaw pact might disappear but it has already ceased to have much military relevance. I remember a debate in the Hungarian national assembly, at which I was representing the North Atlantic Assembly. I said to Hungarian Members of Parliament that we had an alliance of parliamentarians in the form of the North Atlantic Assembly. Yet we were meeting them as parliamentarians at an assembly of Alliance Members and parliamentarians from individual countries in the Warsaw pact. I asked them why they did not consider forming an organisation like ours so that parliamentarians of one alliance could meet those of the other. The almost unanimous response was that it would take some time to set up such an organisation and in the meantime the Warsaw pact would have ceased to exist. There was not much point in finding a counterpart to us because there would be no counterpart to relate to.

In one sense we might view that with amusement or even delight. But the position is fraught with difficulties. It is difficult to say to eastern Europeans that one of the advantages of totalitarianism and Soviet hegemony in their countries was that tensions, national differences and animosity were kept under control. I am worried that once that hard and heavy hand has been removed and, we hope, all the countries in the region become democratic, the combination of economic crises, political instability, national differences and international differences will make the area one of considerable instability. It will require great judgment by many different powers, super powers, medium-sized and small powers. In the period of turbulence that may come, alliances could be of advantage.

It has been said many times but it is worth repeating that we hope that the evolution to democracy in the Soviet Union proceeds and gathers pace. However, one can never

be certain. History is full of examples of good aspirations that are thwarted. In the 1920s the Treasury said that there would be no war for eight, nine or 10 years. That judgment was generated more by financial considerations than realistic calculation of the evolution of Europe.

We need NATO as an insurance policy. Even if the Warsaw pact collapses, there is no earthly reason why we should expect NATO to collapse in sympathy. After all, the Warsaw pact is less necessary to the Soviet Union than NATO is to us. It is almost unthinkable that we could devise our national security policies in a vacuum, unrelated to those of our NATO allies. But it is possible for the Soviet Union to guarantee its security with its own forces. The absence of its forces in eastern Europe and the absence of reliance on its non-Soviet Warsaw pact allies will not necessarily present the same potential disaster for the Soviet Union military as the collapse of NATO would present to us.

It has been said that we need the Royal Air Force because of out-of-area activities. Such activities must not necessarily be construed as rapid deployment forces from Britain, the United States and France charging throughout the world. Those countries have displayed great restraint in the use of their forces out of area. But we must realise that we are partly to blame for the position that we are in now. Third world countries now have substantial armed forces, many of which have been supplied by the Soviet Union and its allies and western industrial nations, such as Britain, France and the United States. We are now dealing with countries that, as part of the natural desire for national self respect, aggrandisement, securing their borders and increasing diplomatic initiatives outside their borders, have become substantial military forces.

The Soviet Union has exported missiles which have been adapted by Iran, Iraq and Syria. According to SIPRI, about 20 countries probably have a ballistic missile capability. Many of those have the capability, some potentially and others actually, to put some form of nuclear warhead on those ballistic missiles. Countries that cannot do that, have the capability to put on the poor man's nuclear missiles—chemical weapons.

The lethal combination of chemical weapons, nuclear warheads and ballistic weapons in the hands of countries outside NATO and the Warsaw pact is potentially threatening to us. The longer the range of such countries' missiles becomes, the greater is the potential danger, perhaps not this year or next year, but at some time in the future.

We must remember that, even if we were in perfect harmony with the Soviet Union and its allies, there would still be a potential threat to western interests. That means that any process of strategic denuclearisation must incorporate not only the super powers, Britain, France and China, but other countries, too. If not, it will be injurious to our national interest to reduce or to eliminate our nuclear weapons because, at the same time, medium-ranking powers, which would wish to be excluded from the process, would almost become super powers, by default.

I am not saying that eventually I do not wish to see a nuclear-free world, but we must view the world situation maturely and realistically. I argue and will continue to argue the case for our Alliance to survive. Integral to its survival is the continuing involvement of the United States. We know of the inclinations of many Congressmen and of many other people in the United States who, historically, have been reluctant partners in NATO. They hark back to the days of United States isolationism. Now, with the pressure of the Soviet Union withdrawing from eastern Europe and with the confusion over Germany's future role, there will be diplomatic, psychological and economic pressures in the United States to call its troops back home. After all, are not those troops in a continent that does not always appreciate their presence?

Although there is a great temptation, such withdrawal would be folly. It would be an economic folly because, with a military presence in Europe, the United States has advantages other than security advantages. Many countries in Europe, including in eastern Europe, would welcome a continuing American presence for reasons of which we are all aware. I refer to what this generation sees as the "danger" of a united Germany. I do not join the chorus of people who are fearful of the Kohls of this world, but who knows what will happen in the future? It is in our interests that a substantial American presence should remain. I hope that the Americans will have the sense to realise that their future is bound up militarily, economically and culturally with that of Europe. They should resist the easy temptation to satisfy and placate public opinion by withdrawing.

The future of Germany is clearly a complicating factor. If Germany should decide that the price of independence and unification is neutrality, it would deal a blow to the Alliance from which it would be difficult to recover. We must recognise that West Germany is overpopulated militarily, with its own armed forces of the Bundeswehr and the British, French and American forces. Clearly, there must be some thinning out of those forces—not just because the threat has diminished, but because there is no reason why the German population should expect to bump into tanks or to have aircraft on low-flying sorties regularly.

However, if the troops are to be thinned out—and some Germans might argue that neutrality is the only way to achieve independence—how will our Alliance survive with a half-hearted or a neutral Germany? There would be no territory. A general would find it impossible to organise any theoretical or practical defence without including the Federal Republic in his calculations. We need only look at a map of Europe to realise that.

We must bear in mind the Soviet interests as well as our own. I have attended meetings with Soviets who have far more reasons than we have to be anxious about the developments in central Europe. I recall chairing a meeting that was attended by distinguished Soviet parliamentarians, including General Akromeyhev, General Lobovov, the chief of staff of the Warsaw pact, and Valentin Falin, who is the head of the international section of the central committee. Falin referred to the newly released figures of the war dead, which amounted to over 25 million people. Clearly, some would say that we have no right to interfere in Germany, but we must say that we have history to remind us that our futures are bound up in their decisions.

I hope that the formula of two plus four will not simply be a process that ratifies anything that the Germans want and that they will have the maturity to realise that Britain, France, the United States, the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland and many other countries in central, eastern and western Europe have a vested interest in the right decisions being made in the next six to 12 months. We must not only ensure that German security will be guaranteed, but that Soviet security and our security will be guaranteed also.

[Mr. Bruce George]

Those are some of the dilemmas. If the wrong decisions are made and we are turfed out of Germany, how shall we be able to relocate our tanks and aircraft? Ministers will have to face horrendous problems and they will certainly earn their money in the months ahead. In many ways, Ministers on all sides of this argument have had an easy task in the past. There used to be a definable threat and their task was how to fund the meeting of that threat. However, there are now so many cross-currents, problems and crises that how to calibrate the different elements in our part of the equation with those of our allies and of the Warsaw pact is an immensely complicated problem that we have to get right quickly.

We must remember the issue of the peace dividend. The public opinion polls are not entirely unanimous about this. Such a poll in *The Independent* a month ago suggested that the majority of people wanted to maintain the present levels of defence expenditure because of the current uncertainty. Although positive trends are emanating from eastern Europe, there is also an element of uncertainty. In such times it is prudent not to go through the catastrophic 1930s decision-making that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), for which both parties must accept some blame in relation to the situation that eventually emerged.

We must realise that negotiations are taking place. The CFE process is proceeding and an agreement will be reached in three or four months. As part of that treaty or agreement, NATO is clearly thinking hard about how each country will reduce its forces. Perhaps we should not be tempted—indeed, I hope that there will be Governments who will not be tempted—to make cuts prior to an agreement being signed by the members of the Alliance or prior to the signing of a CFE treaty. There have been negotiations and studies by SACEUR—Supreme Allied Commander Europe—which I understand are now to be passed to the military committee and which will then go to the political authorities. Let us get an agreement on cuts in conventional forces; on who is to make the cuts and on where they will fall. We can then agree rationally to a fair sharing of those cuts. Some countries have made their cuts over the decades and know that there is no logical reason why they should make a percentage cut while other countries have maintained a greater contribution. Those countries should be treated more favourably. The temptation is to say, "Let us cut in advance." Public opinion may also say "cut", but we should be cautious. We should reach an agreement in NATO and then sign an agreement with the Soviet Union so that the process will be carried out rationally.

With the diminished threat and with the pressure on our defence budget, we in this country must ask how any CFE or other cuts can be made. NATO will give us some guidance, but I suspect that we shall have to take most decisions unilaterally. It should not be salami-slicing; the process must be carried out rationally. We must ask what troops we require in the decade ahead. Ministers must act with caution and with some imagination.

There are two or three further points that I wish to raise briefly. Co-operation in aircraft development is still very important. On the question of EFA, I advise hon. Members to read the excellent House of Commons brief written by Richard Ware. We shall still need sophisticated aircraft for all sorts of reasons. In the old days, the Spitfire or the Hurricane could be built in a couple of weeks, or perhaps even more quickly. These days, Governments have to make their procurement decisions and then live with them. Having made a decision, a Government will not see an aircraft for 10 to 15 years. I hope very much that the EFA will survive.

I realise that low-flying aircraft are a damned nuisance. I am fortunate to represent an urban constituency where there is not much overflying. Of course, we have other hazards of modern life that people in rural areas are spared. As I express sympathy for people who have to tolerate low-flying aircraft, I hope that they will have some sympathy for my constituents, who have to endure pollution so that people living in more idyllic surroundings may have products and services.

There is no reason why Germany should continue to be subjected to the current levels of overflying, but neither is there any reason for us to expect the Indians of Labrador to suffer the same problem. There is no reason for us to go looking round unpopulated parts of the world to cause anxiety there.

Some progress can be made by way of simulation, but we are not yet living in a world so idyllic that aircraft do not need to be produced. So long as we need aircraft to defend us we shall need pilots to fly them, and I regret that, unless pilots get adequate training—and the increased use of simulators is only a partial solution—we shall continue to have the problem of low-flying aircraft for some time. Here I should refer to the inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee. The Select Committee on Defence, of which I am a member, is also conducting an inquiry. We hope that it will be possible to give some advice to Ministers. But there are no simple panaceas, and that is something that those people who think that we should take our problem to areas over the seas, to Labrador or to north Africa, or who think that the Germans should have to put up with it will have to realise. I cannot offer any simple solution, nor, I am sure, can anyone who understands the subject.

We are living in exciting times. Who would have thought, two years ago, that today we would be talking about the Start agreement, and the CFE agreement, about the collapse of the Warsaw pact, or about democracy in eastern Europe? These are, indeed, exciting times, but exciting times require rational decision making, and I hope that we shall see a continuance of that.

9.1 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I am very grateful for the opportunity to join other hon. Members in congratulating the Royal Air Force on its fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Britain. Unlike others who have spoken, I am no expert on this subject. Indeed, I am rather pleased about that because an expert has been defined as "'X', an unknown quantity, and 'spurt', a little squirt under pressure".

I should like, first, to take issue with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who made what I thought were some very dangerous remarks in relation to low flying and the range of tactical aircraft in central Europe. In particular, he put heavy emphasis on the term "enemy territory". I should have preferred the term "enemy-held territory". Even if the countries of the eastern bloc that are currently in turmoil do decide to abandon the Warsaw pact, or at least to take on a neutral or non-participatory role in the Soviet system, there will be

considerable danger for the West, including the United Kingdom. To realise this, one has to go back only 50 years and consider the turmoil that created the conditions for the second world war, which included tremendous instability in central Europe.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks about low flying worried me. The suggestion that, under present conditions, particular countries in central Europe would be targets is quite ludicrous. Our experience in the Falklands, and the Americans' rather more recent experience in Libya, have shown the tremendous importance of low flying. It is the only way a pilot can really be sure of delivering his cargo to target. What has been said should not be restricted to the European theatre. It is necessary to be broader. Of course it is inconvenient to have aircraft flying low over one's constituency, but it is a necessary evil.

In these times, the definition "enemy territory" is contentious. I think that it is worth pointing out that the agreement that was reached 10 days ago, allowing 195,000 Soviet troops to be stationed in eastern Europe, represents the first legitimisation of any kind of Soviet troops in eastern Europe. The agreement means that, respectively, there will be 195,000 American and Soviet troops in Europe, plus an additional 30,000 American troops stationed on the periphery.

I believe that that agreement was a mistake. If we had kept our powder dry and held our hand a little longer, we would have had substantial cards to play. I am worried that, at this moment, we should legitimise the stationing of Soviet troops outside their border. It does not surprise me that such decisions are taken. I am reminded of my horror on Christmas eve when I heard a Minister say that the West would understand if Soviet troops invaded Romania.

Two RAF bases may become available as the result of the peace dividend—Brize Norton and, possibly, Greenham Common. Brize Norton is an important transport centre and it is strategically located, especially when one considers the overloading of the air corridors and the tremendous air traffic in the south-east. Every year in the summer we consistently see the appalling congestion because Gatwick and Heathrow are overloaded with aircraft.

There is a great desire to shift many of those air movements away from the south-east, and two candidates for that purpose present themselves immediately. One is Brize Norton, which is under-used by the RAF, and the other is Greenham Common, which has terrific facilities and which is to be abandoned by the United States Air Force.

We would be in terrible danger if we anticipated the collapse of the eastern bloc and neglected to order new equipment. There is a tremendous lead time in the sophisticated procurement system and it would be to the United Kingdom's disadvantage to anticipate events too far ahead.

It is also important to consider the security requirements of the United Kingdom and the RAF. The RAF provost police and the Security Service had a grisly experience during the Cyprus trial. I do not want to go into the details of that trial because it resulted in acquittals, but the report on the conduct of the interrogations that took place showed a damning lack of expertise. I have always believed that the Security Service should be enhanced and given greater powers, especially with regard to vetting. It comes as a surprise to many critics of the Security Service and others to discover that it does not conduct positive vetting, that that is done by the Procurement Executive of the MOD, the Security Service believing that security is far too important to be left to the experts.

Those people who are concerned about events in Europe and who advocate using the peace dividend—too quickly for many people—would be well advised to study the article that has appeared in the press in the past two or three days by Oleg Gordievsky. It provides a most terrifying indictment of Brezhnev and the Soviet perception of the Western threat. Until 1982, when Pershing was deployed, the Soviets, according to Oleg Gordievsky, seriously believed that there was a strong possibility of a first strike being made by NATO. That shows the danger of not having good communications and good understanding on both sides. I hope that one purpose of having strong defence, a well-equipped RAF and proper verification procedures will be to allay fears in the eastern bloc.

When one talks about security for the West and about verification, many people believe that verification is an institutionalised espionage system. We have to accept that the Soviets will not be satisfied just with the on-site verification that we have seen at Greenham Common, with Soviet officers arriving at short notice to ensure that cruise missiles had gone or were being removed; they will always need alternative verification which will involve clandestine surveillance, and therefore a role for their intelligence services. Espionage will not end.

Just last year, there was a dramatic development in the strategic balance. Code-named Miracle, the first ballistic missile was brought down in flight by a laser weapon. Such a development can alter the strategic balance between East and West. The Soviets, being anxious about verification and about new developments in this highly specialised technical sphere, will unquestionably continue to indulge in espionage.

I am grateful for the opportunity to congratulate the RAF again. I simply urge the House and Ministers not to spend the peace dividend too early.

9.11 pm

Mr. Rogers: The House is anxious to get on to the Adjournment, but I should like to deal with some important points which have come up in the debate. Low flying was mentioned by several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). Outside any arguments as to whether low flying is necessary, there are many complaints about the way in which practising is done.

I wish that it was not thought all the time in the House that if an hon. Member makes valid criticisms he is against something. My hon. Friends have put forward genuine complaints from constituents. Anyone who has been bugged, if I may so describe it, by a Tornado at 100 ft. will complain. It is a shattering experience. The Minister may say that people living near an aerodrome know what happens, but holidaymakers in west and mid-Wales, for example, are not used to it. They do not expect it. Suddenly this awful machine flies just over their heads. Anyone who has undergone that experience, as I have, knows that it is shattering. Someone on an airfield can cope with it because he is expecting it, but I can understand the old and infirm complaining about low flying.

We do not want to argue about the merits of low flying, but I ask the Government to implement some of the

[Mr. Rogers]

proposals in the report of the Public Accounts Committee that was published recently. One suggestion was that the Government should examine the control system for low flying. In the past, two planes going in opposite directions crashed into each other over the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The only response from the Government was that the pilots should have seen each other, that there should have been visual contact. Pilots now have to submit the information when they want to practise low flying, but no one checks that they are all flying in the same direction. We want more control on those issues. I do not want to argue the theory or principle of low flying, but on 9 March 1989 the Minister said:

"as a means of augmenting the existing system, we have been considering the use of a Skyguard fire-control radar system to monitor the heights of low-flying aircraft. The system has been subjected to a series of trials".—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 1061.]

Will the Minister inform the House—perhaps by placing information in the Library—whether the system is in operation, or is subject to further delays?

One subject that has not been referred to—I hope that the House will forgive me for raising it at this late stage—is ethnic minorities within the services. I applaud the consultative document commissioned by the Government, and recently published by Peat, Marwick, McLintock. Will additional training for recruitment officers be introduced? Will recruitment advertising be reorganised to include a more positive image of ethnic minorities in the services? Above all, what steps are the Government taking to deal with racism in the armed forces? That is a complicated issue and, seemingly, it will take a long time to resolve. There are instances of both verbal and physical bullying and I should like to think that responsible officers are vigilant in that aspect of their duties. I seek the Government's assurance that, where senior ranks are negligent, the appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

I want to comment on the speech by the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). I am surprised that a man of his reasonableness should deliberately distort what has been said by Opposition Members. He did himself no credit by suggesting that Opposition Members were not prepared to support the European fighter aircraft programme. He knows that to be absolute nonsense and he should withdraw his statement. As I said in my opening speech, we support the project. However, I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was here to hear me.

Mr. Jack: I shall be precise about what I said. I welcomed the hon. Gentleman's support for the Tornado and the European fighter aircraft, but I wondered how he would square that view with Labour party policy, as it was planning to have a conversion agency that would effectively run down the industry. How can the EFA project be compatible with the Labour party policy of opposition to sales?

Mr. Rogers: The conversion programme is a response to disarmament, not a result of it. Opposition Members meet many trade unionists—some from the hon. Gentleman's constituency—who ask us what will happen if there are cuts. The hon. Gentleman should not mislead the House as there have been substantial cuts under this Government. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) was mentioned earlier. Hon. Members should ask him about cuts. I should like to ask him about the cuts in the helicopter industry in his constituency a year ago.

People ask us what we should do.

We must think about turning munition and armament factories towards more peaceful production. That will eventually happen. The hon. Member for Fylde thinks in a Neanderthal way if he imagines that, because we have armament production now, it will never alter. Arms conversion is something that the Government should consider more seriously. If they did, the country's economy would be better balanced.

The hon. Gentleman also misled the House when he said that it was my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who caused the Falklands war. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will want to correct me on that, but I am sure that that is what he said——

Mr. Jack *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but he said, and it is on the record, that the action of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East and the removal of the aircraft carrier force from the south Atlantic created the problems that led to the Falklands war.

Mr. Jack: I think that the hon. Gentleman is muddling my remarks, in which I talked about the Falklands scenario and possible out-of-area operations, with those of another hon. Member—possibly my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who intervened in my speech. Those were not words that I used and I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his allegation.

Mr. Rogers: I shall withdraw it. It was the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). It is a pity that he is not in the Chamber now, because one of the daftest remarks that I heard during the debate was that that was the trigger for the war. Any cuts in our aircraft carrier force were made in the east of Suez policy back in 1967, which was an awful long time before the Falklands war. The Government's withdrawal of HMS Endurance was a bigger factor than anything else in the precipitation of the Falklands war.

It was nice to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) making his speech. I know that this afternoon he had no intention of speaking in the debate, but he gave his usual scintillating speech on a number of wide-ranging topics. He asked the House to forgive him because he had to go off to play the Lords in a chess match. I am sure that the House will be greatly interested to know that he won one match, but was adjudicated against in the other. I asked my hon. Friend not to ask for an inquiry into the adjudication and he assured me that he will not do so tonight. I admire his skill in getting the premium bond payments to MI5 operatives into the RAF debate. I felt that he would do so.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) is not here——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It was a good speech.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend the Member for Workington says that it was a good speech. I do not understand why the Government do not make the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood an adviser. He obviously knows what he is talking about. The Minister should take

him on in whatever job he has available to help him on his way. He reorganised the Air Force beautifully. He shuffled the squadrons around—perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow will get him to join the chess team, he was so good at shuffling squadrons about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington made a substantial speech about the problem of low flying to which I have alluded. I merely reinforce his remarks in relation to the distress caused to people by low flying in their area. My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) talked about the same problem of low flying. As I understand it, the definition of a conurbation is a large, densely populated urban sprawl, formed by the growth and coalescence of individual towns and/or cities. Those are the sorts of area where low flying takes place. It is no good denying that and saying that it takes place only over rural and sparsely populated areas. It would not be popular in some of the suburban areas of the south-east or around London.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Tayside, North is not here. It is always nice to hear his contribution to these debates because of his RAF background, and he always graces the occasion with his kilt. It is nice to see him wearing it. He says that it is an RAF kilt, but I thought that it was a Douglas kilt. Perhaps it is a Douglas and an RAF kilt at the same time.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on his appointment as Inspector General of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. I called him the commodore earlier, but that was a mistake.

I was surprised that the hon. Member for Tayside, North did not support the development of the EH101 helicopter, and that he came out so heavily in favour of the Black Hawk, which is a fine helicopter, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) can testify. We had a trip in one last week in terrible weather and I admit that we felt very safe.

I join in the tributes to the reserve and auxiliary forces and to the cadet force. I am old enough to remember the contribution of the volunteer reserve at the time of the battle of Britain.

This debate, like last year's, has taken place against a background of Government prevarication and inaction. There are procurement decisions that need to be made. It is not a matter of defence policy being industry-led. Certain needs must be met if the functions that we are asking our service men to undertake are to be carried out. . The Government refuse to contemplate a defence review. We have yet to see any consideration on their part of the industrial and economic effects of disarmament. The Labour party has called repeatedly for a defence review and on successive occasions we have called on the Government to plan for conversion. The Government's defence policy—doing nothing—is deeply worrying to all who are concerned about the proper defence of this country, and only the election of a Labour Government can ensure proper consideration of those matters and an appropriate defence policy for Britain.

9.27 pm

Mr. Alan Clark: A number of interesting and constructive points have been made. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) drew attention to the fact that while, as he called them, calendar girls can get access to RAF bases, he found such access impossible. If he communicates with me, I shall be glad to facilitate his entry to an RAF base.

The hon. Member for Leyton read at great length from an article in *The Independent* by Mark Urban. I enjoy listening to the hon. Gentleman, and I prefer him being himself to his quoting a correspondent who, most hon. Members would agree, does not enjoy the highest level of credibility—unlike the hon. Gentleman himself.

Similarly, I prefer the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) when he is speaking spontaneously and with sincerity. Then he is at his most effective and convincing. When he is reciting various items fed to him by the graduate of the Bradford peace studies school, or whoever writes the hon. Gentleman's research, he is rather less persuasive. However, I shall do my best to answer some of his points.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clark: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have been in the Chamber for five and three quarter hours, with one absence of 12 minutes. In my opening speech I gave way 17 times, five of them to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I have been on my feet now for about two and three quarter minutes, and I hope to be able to proceed for a little while without having to give way—

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman should not attack Mark Urban like that.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman chooses to defend this journalist. As we know, journalists are extremely sensitive to any sort of attack, in contrast with the way in which they themselves behave—a characteristic of public life with which we are all familiar. If Mark Urban wants to fight his own battle, he can proceed as he is doing at present. I do not see why he should rely on so distinguished an hon. Gentleman as the Member for Linlithgow to defend him.

The hon. Member for Rhondda spoke about the EH 101. We cannot place a production order until we are satisfied about performance, cost and contractual arrangements. In particular, as he said we must be satisfied with the arrangements for the integration of the very complex mission systems. The Select Committee on Defence recognised in its report that it would be wrong to commit ourselves to production until we were satisfied on these matters.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the number of Tornado ADV aircraft in store. There are presently 20 in store at St. Athan and not 32 as the hon. Gentleman said. In its report SDE88 the Select Committee on Defence recognised that storage was the most cost-effective course open to the Ministry of Defence after deployment plans had to be altered when it was apparent that insufficient radars to an acceptable standard would be delivered compared with the plan.

I can confirm that there is no change at present in the United Kingdom's declared intention to take 250 European fighter aircraft. It is too early to forecast the eventual size of our requirement. The hon. Member for Rhondda spoke about IUKADGE, the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system.

We have acknowledged the problems in the integrated command and control system, which is now some three

[Mr. Clark]

years late because of software problems. The prime contractor recognises his responsibility under the fixed price contract and we remain in close touch to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to rectify the situation.

The question asked about the community charge is certainly important. In general, service personnel, like the rest of the population, are liable to register for and pay the community charge in respect of their sole or main residence. There is no standardised level of charge for service personnel, and that is in line with the principle of local accountability. Those in service accommodation have no choice about where they live, and their community charge liability will effectively be limited to £1 a week above the service average by refund of accommodation charges.

I draw to the attention of the House a commendable guide to how the community charge applies to service personnel and their dependants. It has been issued by the directorate of personnel services in the Royal Air Force and I have given instructions for a copy to be placed in the Library. I hope that hon. Members will find it interesting and helpful.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister says that there will be some equation about payment and that service men would not pay more than £1 above the average. Surely the Minister accepts that the poll tax is substantial and will average well over £200. *[Interruption.]* I am being generous. The maximum that anyone will pay is £1 above the average, but the amount will still be much larger than the percentage that is paid in the quartering charges in lieu of rates. It will still be a big charge, particularly on junior ranks. I emphasise again that a private or a corporal will pay the same poll tax as a general or an air vice-marshal.

Mr. Clark: I have told the House the position as it stands. I am aware of the equation that the hon. Gentleman has outlined. We are looking at the possibility of other solutions, but I can give no assurance about that now.

The House enjoyed two vintage performances by the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Linlithgow. The hon. Member for Workington returned to a subject with which he has occupied a good deal of the House's time in earlier debates. He devoted some 35 minutes to telling the House that things have changed in eastern Europe. I am sure we are all extremely grateful to him for reminding us of that. The change started more or less when I began my period of office in the Ministry of Defence. I leave it to the House to judge the extent to which the linkage is coincidence. None of the letters that the hon. Gentleman has received on this subject will have been signed by me. The phrase "deep in enemy territory" may exist somewhere on a word processor. I shall immediately take the matter in hand and make sure that the phrase is changed to "deep in the territory of an enemy". I hope that he will be satisfied by that.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked a number of pertinent questions, and ended—characteristically and reassuringly, because we all like hon. Members to behave in character—with a highly idiosyncratic, if not batty, suggestion that the premium bond computer was being used to pay secret service operatives. That is interesting, and I am sure that we are grateful for the suggestion, although it is not related to the RAF. I was glad that he used this opportunity to ventilate this important topic.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister should take this seriously.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman spoke about the cost of the Harrier GR5 to GR7 conversion. I am sorry to give an irritating answer, but this is still subject to negotiation with the contractor, so the answer is commercial in confidence, and I cannot give him the figures.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The figures are known to Congress.

Mr. Clark: If the hon. Member for Linlithgow can get the figures from another source or a technical paper, he should ask for that information.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the Minister leaves this point, will he give way?

Mr. Clark: No, I will not.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the Minister will give way.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister allow me to speak?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that, unless the Minister gives way, he must resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clark: No. The hon. Gentleman must recognise, as I have already said, that I gave way 17 times in my opening speech, and five times to him. Since then, he has tried to intervene in this speech to defend the reputation of the defence correspondent of *The Independent*, and I was glad that I did not allow him to do that. Now he wants me to give way again.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister allow me?

Mr. Clark: No, I will not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) must resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister allow me?

Mr. Clark: No, I will not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Linlithgow must resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, it cannot be a point of order. I know that the hon. Gentleman must be frustrated, but the Minister has said that he will not give way, so he must resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This involves protection. If there has been a statement that the British Cabinet Office solemnly is considering——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This cannot be a point of order. I have no knowledge of these matters. I wish that I had.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) spoke about the decision to employ women in the RAF in non-combat roles. This was announced last July and was fully endorsed by the air staff.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What did you think?

Mr. Clark: Had the hon. Gentleman been in the Chamber—I do not reproach him for this because he nearly always is in the Chamber—he would have heard my view, which was drawn out from me at some length earlier.

The decision was fully endorsed by the air staff. The ability of women to fly aircraft is not in question. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) for drawing attention to the distinguished role of women as air transport auxiliaries during the war. The employment of women in combat roles is an entirely separate question. We took a major step in this sphere last July and we need to review the outcome before considering any further extension of women's roles.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow also mentioned the WE177 replacement. We are convinced that there will be a requirement for a replacement for the free-fall bomb, but it is not possible at this stage to say whether it will be the American or French alternative.

The hon. Member for Rhondda raised the question of privatising the search and rescue service. The then Minister of State for the Armed Forces made it clear in a 1988 RAF debate that there were no plans to contract-out the search and rescue helicopter service. I am sure that that will be reassuring to the whole House.

A number of hon. Members spoke about display flying. Modifications that have been made to the Red Arrows routine have been explained by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement. These have eliminated formation changes while aircraft are pointing towards a crowd. I can also confirm that no display aircraft may perform aerobatics or manoeuvres above crowds.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) spoke of search and rescue operations from Leuchars. While I fully appreciate why he was not in the Chamber for the start of the debate, I covered that issue in my opening remarks. I told the House that we were satisfied with the greatly improved service in the area concerned, taking account of the Royal Navy and RAF Sea Kings at Prestwick and Lossiemouth and the coastguard S61Ns at Stornoway and Sumburgh. We have no plans to review that deployment.

Questions were asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and others about the replacement of the Wessex. There are no plans as yet to replace that aircraft, which continues to give useful service in a demanding role.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth also referred to apprentices. The drop in the number of apprentices, from 264 to 136, is explained by the phasing out of the apprentice scheme by 1991. The scheme was unpopular with potential recruits and did not meet the needs of the service. It has been replaced by an imaginative package for better qualified youngsters and provides early practical experience of operational work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt) has been in attendance virtually throughout the debate. I am sorry that I cannot meet his concern about the closure of the historic RAF station in his constituency. I fear that we do not have any doubt that the move of Biggin Hill to Cranwell makes economic sense, and events in Europe will not affect that decision.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy)—who always contributes in a significant way to defence debates and has done so ever since I have been a Member—expressed concern at the length of time that the NATO identification system was taking to put in place. This is an important subject and I fully echo his concern. Discussions at Government and industrial level between Britain, Germany and France are at an advanced stage and I hope that it will be possible to agree on a positive way forward to full development by the middle of this year.

A large number of points were made in the debate and I fear that I cannot cover them all, but all hon. Members have been agreed, whether expressly or by implication, on the skills and professionalism of the Royal Air Force and on its essential role in maintaining our security.

Some hon. Members have said that they hope that members of the RAF will read the record of the debate in the *Official Report*. I hope so, too, despite the rather unfortunate remarks of the hon. Member for Workington about air crew lying, which were an extremely prejudicial and one-sided presentation of the position. Those who read the report will have a clear idea of the support for the RAF that exists in the House, and I believe that today's debate has been thoroughly useful and worthwhile.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A Minister—moreover, a Defence Minister—has been replying to a debate in the House of Commons. It is not yet 10 pm. He has been asked, in the politest and most civilised way possible, a factual question whose import he could easily deny. He could say that *The Times* report, which the Ministry of Defence has read, is absolutely without foundation—that what has been written in our major paper of record is absolute balderdash.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may well be so, but what is the point of order for me?

Mr. Skinner: I will tell you what it is, Mr. Speaker. If the Government are now paying out wages by ERNIE, you could be the next on the list. Once the thing gets off the ground, they will come to you and say, "Now look here, Mr. Speaker. We have a new device. We are going to pay your salary and pension with it when they kick you out of this place." Of course, you may leave voluntarily, when the Conservatives lose the next election. If the proposal is to pay you with premium bonds, Mr. Speaker, it will be up to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), as the new Defence Minister, to stop it.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the question is hypothetical for the moment.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot answer such questions. His argument is with the Minister, not with me.

Mr. Martlew: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I said that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces—the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton)—had misled the House about the stationing of the F15E in Suffolk. The Minister has not dealt with my point. In a written answer to me, however, he suggested that the F15E would be placed at RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may well be so, but, again, it is not a matter for me. Adjournment debate—Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It will take time out of the Adjournment debate, and that is not fair.

Mr. Dalyell: My point of order concerns a different aspect of the debate—the Minister's behaviour to the House. Ministers make jocular references to matters being for their more senior colleagues rather than for them: tonight the Minister has said to the House, "For heaven's sake, this is not a matter for a mere Minister of State; it is for the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office had better answer for itself." He more or less said, in our hearing, that this was a matter for other Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister may well have suggested that, but, again, it is not for me to answer. This is a matter for the Minister; it is not a point of order.

Leigh Environmental Ltd.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

9.47 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Adjournment debate has began, but I will hear the point of order.

Mr. Fraser: I had given notice, Mr. Speaker, that I would present a petition before the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's petition will be heard at 10 pm.

Mr Barnes: I understand, Mr. Speaker, that that means that at 10 pm my Adjournment debate will be interrupted by a petition.

The subject that I am introducing for the Adjournment debate concerns the Leigh Environmental plant at Killamarsh. It is not new to the House as I raised the matter previously on 13 March 1989 in a debate on the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill, entitled, "North-East Derbyshire (Environmental Regeneration)". It is one of the vast number of environmental problems in my constituency. The Ministry has received numerous letters from me on the matter and I have tabled various parliamentary questions.

I have been seeking the opportunity to raise the matter in an Adjournment debate for some time. It directly affects the interests of a wide section of my constituents and people in neighbouring constituencies to the north of the plant as many people from my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) use the Rother Valley country park.

The background to the development of the Leigh Environmental plant at Killamarsh is that initially it was the site of a tar distillation plant. That is of some significance as some of the later developments on that site made use of planning permissions that were given to the tar distillation plant and were rather inappropriate to the new methods and technologies that were later introduced.

The current style of operations began with a firm called Polymeric Treatments Ltd. which is generally known as Polymerics. Polymerics is a branch of Leigh Interests plc. The transfer of its name to Leigh Environmental is merely a transfer within the same company.

Although the Rother Valley country park is to the north of the plant, the rest of the area surrounding the site is a housing estate with some 1,000 residents. The Norwood estate was built in the days of the tar distillation plant without any knowledge of the operations at Leigh Environmental. Had it been the other way around, the new planning conditions laid upon Leigh Environmental would have been much stricter.

Leigh Environmental claims to move waste anywhere in the country between Aberdeen and Plymouth. Although the Leigh Environmental site at Killamarsh is not the largest of the Leigh Environmental operations, it is centrally situated. About 75 people are employed there, but many of them are drivers, and therefore are at the

plant only for limited periods as they are involved in the network of Leigh Environmental activities around the country.

Leigh Interests plc, the parent company, has 73 subsidiaries of which Leigh Environmental Ltd. and Polymeric Treatments Ltd. are but two. It has subsidiaries in Switzerland, Canada and the United States. Although it might not be one of the largest companies in the country, it is large in terms of waste disposal and has multinational interests. In 1987 its sales were £43 million which represented £50,000 per worker in Leigh Interests plc. About 10 per cent. of that was profit, so the profit per worker in 1987 was some £5,000, and that figure has obviously been increased by inflation.

The plant's current processes are waste disposal, with permission for landfill at one of the lagoons remaining from the days of the tar distillation plant; solvent-recovery, which has caused many complaints about smells and emissions; garaging and maintenance; storage and transit of waste, and there is some problem about what is being stored in the area; and chemical incineration, which produces particular problems.

The incinerators that are at Killamarsh were used first in Nottinghamshire, where they caused many problems for the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). They were purchased from Berridge Incinerators of Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, and they were used for 10 years without planning permission. That led to smells, the destruction of plant life and smoke emissions. Those problems were ended only by Nottinghamshire county council taking High Court action.

Those incinerators are now operating at Killamarsh. They were installed under planning permission given for the tar distillation plant to use Lancashire boilers, which had a lower capacity and were intended for entirely different operations. Derbyshire county council has sought to restrict the incinerators' hours of use, but the company has appealed against that and still uses them until about 10 pm.

That hazard in Killamarsh began at roughly the same time as a former hazard that considerably affected my constituents was removed. That hazard was the practice of breaking open transformers to dislodge polychlorinated biphenyls which were then taken to other plants for incineration.

The local community is concerned about safety and has complained about smells from the airborne emissions, the discharge of chemicals from plant into the sewers and irritation of the skin and burning of the eyes.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Before my hon. Friend leaves the problems of his constituents who live nearby, will he comment on the fact that in some circumstances ratepayers would be able to claim a rate rebate because that plant is so close, but under the poll tax they will be unable to take advantage of that, although they may be saving only a small amount of money?

Mr. Barnes: It is often difficult to claim a rate rebate because of the reduction in rateable values. I shall refer later to when I lived beside the Dronfield-Unstone bypass. When it was being constructed I was given a temporary rate rebate because of the problems that it caused. Such rebates will be ended by the poll tax regime. Whereas in the past people may have been given rate rebates for problems such as opencast mining or mining subsidence, they will not be available under the poll tax. I shall seek to discuss the democratic and constitutional implications of the poll tax in a later Adjournment debate.

The first incident at Killamarsh with which I was associated was the 1986 explosion, which Leigh Environmental described as a fire. The fire and explosion destroyed part of a building housing an aerosol recovery plant. The firm was prosecuted by the factory inspector under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for failing to maintain the safety of its employees. In court, the inspector said:

"Here was an accident waiting to happen."

The firm was fined £1,500—the maximum penalty that could be imposed was £2,000—so the court showed its displeasure by making that decision.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

PETITION

South Circular Road

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for, through no fault of mine, interrupting his speech about events in his constituency.

I wish to present a petition on behalf of 3,500 people, principally residents of Tulse Hill in my constituency, which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland assembled.

The humble Petition of the residents of Tulse Hill sheweth.

That it is proposed to alter the London South Circular road by way of a cut and cover tunnel under the Tulse Hill junction and to widen the said road to a four lane standard.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House rejects such proposals to alter the South Circular road and instead to give urgent consideration to the development of alternative and improved public transportation in South London.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc.

The consultation on the south circular road ends today, 28 February, so this is an eleventh-hour plea for the plans not to go ahead. It was a bombshell just before Christmas to find that there was an unheralded plan to convert the south circular into a four-lane highway and to destroy much of the Tulse Hill district in my constituency with a cut-and-cover tunnel while neatly avoiding the Prime Minister's house, only about half a mile further along the south circular road.

The Tulse Hill tunnel proposals have caused great anger. There has already been an extensive realignment at Tulse Hill to accommodate the south circular road. My constituents find it impossible to believe that this could be proposed, given the shortage of homes and decades of cuts in public transport. Thousands of constituents have written to me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not make a speech. He is presenting a petition.

Mr. Fraser: I am coming to the end, Mr. Speaker. Thousands of constituents have written to me and gone to meetings, and I hope that the House will recognise the force of their feelings, which this petition represents.

To lie upon the Table.

Leigh Environmental Ltd.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Mr. Barnes: I cannot say that I was rudely interrupted. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) raised an important constituency matter that affects his constituents, just as my subject concerns my constituents.

Following the 1986 explosion, the Killamarsh residents action committee—KRAC—was formed. I attended some of its early meetings as the parliamentary candidate in the area at the time. The organisation campaigned for a public inquiry into the explosion. Dramatic pictures of the event showed the mass of smoke that was carried over the housing which I have described. Eventually, a deputation was organised, comprising representatives of the parish council and KRAC, and I represented the former Member of Parliament, Ray Ellis. We met the Minister with responsibility for small firms—the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier). Although we did not receive a definite response from him, part of his argument was that the responsibilities were not his but those of the Department of the Environment and that he would send a fairly favourable letter to the appropriate Minister. That occurred.

In the meantime a general election took place. Following the election, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen was given a job in the Department of the Environment so that the letter that he had sent landed on his own desk. When I first arrived in the House I attempted to ensure that a public inquiry took place and that the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen would respond to the letter. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful because he was operating in a different Department under a slightly different regime from the previous one.

The next serious incident was associated with the possible arrival in this country of the Karin B. It was due to arrive with a cargo of toxic waste in a bad condition during the August bank holiday period in 1989. The arrangements seemed to have been made involving the Italian Government and Leigh Environmental interests. I suspected that the arrangements also involved the Department of the Environment. The proposal was to bring the leaky cargo on a German ship into Britain. I have never been able to unearth that unholy alliance, but Leigh Environmental was very much to the fore of the arrival of the Karin B. It said that it was willing to handle the problem.

But for the activity of Friends of the Earth, which alerted us to the difficulty, some of that material could well have ended up in this country and could have been in transit at Killamarsh which is at the northern end of the constituency of Derbyshire, North-East. It is a highly populated area which in the north fits into the Sheffield and Rotherham conurbation. It is dangerous for that type of material to move through such an area.

At one stage Edward Wilkinson of Leigh Environmental admitted that there was a possibility that the material would arrive in Killamarsh, although it was later denied. Leigh Environmental seemed willing to accept popular criticism of the role that it was playing because it found distinct commercial advantages in showing that it had a market, could deal with the material and was in competition with other firms handling waste and toxic material. The firm was receiving free publicity that was bad in environmental terms but was good for it in commercial terms.

A third incident in 1988 involved solvent smells, which are a regular problem. There is difficulty in checking the smells because by the time that the environmental health officer arrives from North-East Derbyshire district council offices in Chesterfield, it is difficult to trace the smells. However, on 28 April 1988 the pollution inspector, Mr. Tomlinson, was in the area and could be contacted. He discovered what the smells were and attributed them to the firm. Although it was not in his area of responsibility—perhaps his area of responsibility is not sufficiently wide—he persuaded the firm to end its processes at that stage, even though the environmental health officers from the district council could not trace the smell.

In another recent incident, because of emissions in the area and the danger and smell from them, the headmaster of a junior school kept the children in the school until the area seemed clear. There was a further incident at the end of 1989 in which discharges into the sewers occurred on a wide scale. There was considerable distress among people in the area. The company claimed that the information from the Yorkshire water authority about the samples of the discharges was

"commercially confidential between ourselves and the Water Authority."

After being contacted by me, the company offered to supply me with that information confidentially. I refused because that information needs to be known within the community. I recognise that detective work could try to discover aspects of that information. Section 117 of the Water Act 1989 might be applied. If enforcement notices were served, the information would be available on a register under the 1988 legislation on the environment and safety information—or at least it could be. To protect the work force, the 1988 Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations might apply. There is not time to go into the details, but those are all problem areas. We should be able much more readily to understand what is happening.

The problems of ensuring that the site is well run seem to stem, first, from the fact that a variety of bodies are responsible for its inspection. They include the North-East Derbyshire district council environmental health officer; Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; Derbyshire county council; the planning authority for the area, which is concerned with the operation of the incinerators that I have described, the Health and Safety Executive, the factory inspectors and, for the sewers, the Yorkshire water authority and, presumably, the National Rivers Authority. Therefore, there is a problem of co-ordination.

There is also a problem with the stretching of planning permission. Leigh Environmental Ltd. is a specialist at attempting to move into areas, taking over and extending former planning permission. That has happened with potential toxic waste disposal at Lumshill quarry near Matlock, which is just outside my constituency of Derbyshire, North-East, although Derbyshire county council has now been able to prevent toxic usage there.

The collapse of the Killamarsh-Polymeric liaison committee in late 1987 also created difficulties. I understand that the committee was re-established last month. However, that shows the great problems about seeking to gain consultation involving the residents' organised body, KRAC, the parish council and others who

represent the area. That was always an avenue of considerable tension in the days when the committee was chaired by the pollution inspector. Later, when the previous pollution inspector no longer fulfilled that function, there was a problem about who would chair the body. That problem has finally been resolved by a joint chairmanship agreement.

Leigh Environmental Ltd 's reputation in areas such as Lumshill and Doncaster, where there are incinerator problems, means that people are bound to be concerned about the company's activities.

Therefore, what can be done? First, we need freedom of information legislation to ensure that information such as that collected about the sewers is readily available. We need to ensure that air pollution is closely monitored and understood within the community. There should also be research into the health of the residents of the area to ascertain whether they have been affected in any way by the operations. Are the fears of those in the area well founded or is it said that in some way the smells are "merely" an inconvenience? They are a massive inconvenience and disturbance to those concerned. It is likely that smells from modern chemical disposal plants will cause serious concern in built-up areas.

There should be improved inspection co-ordination to provide better control of processes. It may be that, under environmental protection provisions, there are opportunities to extend co-operation. The combined findings of the various inspectorates that look into these matters should be readily available to the public, and environmental protection legislation should make it impossible for any undertaking to take over existing planning permission. Such an undertaking should have to start from scratch.

Above all, it seems to me, better consultation with parish councils and with residents' organisations requires the force of law. I mentioned earlier a case in which I had been involved. It concerned the construction of a road. Under the terms of the operation, there was an obligation to consult the local population. There was a great outcry about the development, and public meetings were held. Exactly the type of arrangement about which I am talking was brought into operation. In respect of environmental issues, that kind of arrangement is necessary on a more substantial and more regular basis.

It is held by many that nothing is more important than environmental issues. If we all now have something of a green tint, I hope that the Government will take on board some of the matters that I have raised. I hope also that those in the Leigh company who are concerned with environmental issues are listening and that they will respond to the feelings that I have expressed on behalf of the community.

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on securing this debate and on the way in which he has presented the concerns and anxieties of his constituents, particularly those who live in the vicinity of the Killamarsh plant. The situation is indeed complex, and, like the hon. Gentleman, I shall begin my response by setting out a little of the history of the site over the past decade or so.

As the hon. Gentleman mentioned, the site, until 1979, had operated as a tar works. In those days there were a few complaints, primarily about odours. The site was then bought by Polymeric Treatments Ltd. and was operated as a separation and distillation plant for tar and oil-contaminated waste waters, for which it was registered with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and for other processes involving heating and distillation, the storage and sorting of wastes, the neutralisation of acid pickling liquors, and the use of boilers for raising steam.

The inspectorate received a few complaints about odours from materials handled and stored on the site. One of the major offenders was a waste water lagoon used to separate oil and tar contamination from waste water. This process had been going on for almost a century, and continued until 1982.

In 1980 the boiler plant was converted to the burning of contaminated waste solvents. A plant was installed for the recovery of waste paint solvents in 1983. In 1985, the waste disposal licence was extended, and the company was permitted to remove PCBs and to decontaminate transformers and capacitors. All PCBs from this work were removed from the site for incineration elsewhere. Decontaminated steel casings were recycled by the steel industry. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned, this work ceased in 1986, and permission was rescinded. An aerosol can destruction plant was also located on the site. In 1986 a fire occurred. The company was prosecuted by Her Majesty's factory and agricultural inspectorate, and the processes and the associated plant are no longer in operation.

A new chemical incineration plant for slightly contaminated solvents was proposed in 1987 and included waste-heat recovery via steam generation. I should explain that high standards of purity are required for many solvents and those that cannot be recovered economically must be disposed of safely. Estimates of the quantity of waste solvent produced each year in the United Kingdom are as high as 50 million litres. In fact, the history of this site must be set against the need for the country to dispose of the waste that it produces. The regulatory framework ensures that there is effective control over the disposal of all wastes.

It may help if I summarise the current processes on the site and their regulation. The lagoons are no longer in use and may only be filled with inert material. The neutralisation of acids and the sorting and storage of wastes, other than those that are scheduled processes, are regulated by Derbyshire county council. Solid wastes resulting from acid neutralisation are disposed of on another site. The remaining two processes are more difficult in that they can both give rise to odours. They are solvent recovery and incineration.

Organic solvent recovery is regulated by North-East Derbyshire district council. This will change under the present proposals in the Environmental Protection Bill and solvent recovery by distillation will be a scheduled process to be regulated by HMIP. The schedule for chemical incineration works was amended in 1983 and the regulation of waste paint solvent incineration was then transferred to HMIP. At that time, improvements were requested for the old plant, but there was little business and the company decided not to use the plant any longer.

In 1987, detailed proposals were submitted to HMIP for burning slightly contaminated solvents on the site in newly purchased incinerators. The site was registered early

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

in 1988 in accordance with the Alkali, etc., Works Regulation Act 1906. Three incineration units are on the site. "Best practicable means" were prescribed by HMIP in accordance with the requirements of section 5 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The "means" relate to the operation of plant and limit the emissions from the plant. In addition, HMIP is given details of the analysis of feed materials before incineration of each batch.

The company has been prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act. 1974 following the fire on the aerosol plant and also, in 1982, under the Clean Air Act 1968 for smoke emissions from the boiler plant. However, it has been the nuisance from odours that has caused the local residents most concern and has given rise to the largest number of complaints. There has been a steady improvement in performance of the plant, and North-East Derbyshire district council stated in 1989 that there had been a reduction in complaints about the plant in recent weeks by local residents. Odour nuisances are generally of a transitory nature. The main source of odours has now been traced to the solvent recovery plant and the associated drum-crushing plant. Advice was given by HMIP to the district council on possible improvements. The implementation of the improvements required careful safety evaluation, but I understand they will be completed during April of this year.

The continued improvement to the site roads and the hard standing will allow housekeeping to be improved, and thereby reduce odours from storage and movement. The infilling of the lagoon for which approval was given in 1987 after a public inquiry will eliminate periodic odour from this source. Yorkshire Water is content that water from the works no longer gives regular odour problems. In reply to the hon. Gentleman, I am assured that the smells which were associated with the public sewage system last December were due to animal products and not to the works.

Inspectors from HMIP have been closely involved both in the regulation of this site and in liaising very closely with other regulatory authorities. In 1988 a total of 55 visits were made and in 1989 a total of 36 visits, including visits to observe reported emissions of smoke or fume. Two complaints have been received in the past few months from the junior school at Killamarsh, when visible white emissions caused by alkali fume from the materials burned were noted. The letter to the district council environmental health department was sent to HMIP for comment and reply, and I am glad that inspectors were able to respond in detail.

I do not wish to diminish or minimise the concerns expressed by local residents and the school. The matter has received close attention from the regulatory authorities. They are vigilant to ensure that the emissions comply with the licence conditions. In fact, although several enforcement authorities are involved in the site, liaison has been very effective.

A liaison committee was formed in 1982 with representatives from HMIP and local authorities. Yorkshire water authority was also included as well as the fire services and the Health and Safety Executive. They were all invited to attend meetings, as necessary, for particular items. Meetings were held quarterly until registrable processes ceased in 1987. At that point the HMIP chairman resigned from the committee. However, the committee has recently been reconvened under a chairman from Derbyshire county council, with HMIP again participating. The first meeting has been held, and I understand that another is due in May.

In October 1989 and January 1990, officials from the county council, the district council and HMIP made joint inspection visits to ensure that enforcement was effective and that there was no undue overlap. Current opinion of all three enforcement bodies is that odours and visible emissions are much reduced and usually are of very short duration. Work is in hand on some outstanding items that will yield further improvements.

I am pleased to be able to conclude by stating that HMIP has taken a lead in ensuring effective liasion and in giving direction as well as in enforcing regulations.

Mr. Barnes: I thank the Minister for his contribution. His main argument is that the processes have to take place somewhere and that they are valuable. I do not deny that. The question is whether the whole range of processes should take place in such a plant, given the worries of the surrounding residents. I do not deny that the plant should operate in that area, but because of the problems created by the incinerator and solvent smells, some of the activities should be stopped. Given that the plant is in a built-up, residential area, there should be greater control to ensure that it operates well.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The point that I made earlier is that any industrialised country produces waste of various sorts and that it has to be disposed of. Who disposes of the waste is not my concern, but it is my concern to ensure that high standards control the disposal and that consent conditions are adhered to.

I can give the hon. Gentleman one reassurance. The provisions of the Environmental Protection Bill, which is before the House, will strengthen the control of operations on this site in particular, and of waste management and disposal in general. I mention that because, although concerns and anxieties exist, we are determined that waste disposal comes within a strict and enforced regulatory framework to protect the public and workers alike.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that the transfer of the solvent recovery plant to HMIP control will be a further strengthening of the control over the plant in question. We will be vigilant to ensure that such plants in his constituency live up to the consents granted under the appropriate legislation. If the hon. Gentleman takes that information back to his constituents and reassures them along those lines, something positive will have come out of the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 1 March 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February], That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 8 March.

MIDLAND METRO BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Monday 5 March at Seven o'clock.

ADELPHI ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [27 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 8 March.

Mr. Speaker: As the remaining 14 Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I will deal with them as a single group.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

PENZANCE SOUTH PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*

SHARD BRIDGE BILL *(By Order)*

TEES AND HARTLEPOOL PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

HUMBERSIDE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CLYDE PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITY (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 8 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Kincora Boys' Home

1. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the responsibilities of his Department in relation to the circumstances surrounding allegations concerning the Kincora boys' home.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): The Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland has the general duty to secure the provision of personal social services in Northern Ireland, including the provision of homes for children. The majority of, but not all, the statutory functions connected with this general duty are delegated by the Department to area health and social services boards.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Minister a question of which I have given him notice? On what date did the Northern Ireland Office first learn that the RUC, the Belfast social services department or the British Army in Lisburn were aware of alleged irregularities at the Kincora boys' home?

Mr Cope: I am grateful for the notice that the hon. Gentleman gave my office before lunch. Allegations of criminal homosexual activity at Kincora became known to the Northern Ireland Office on 24 January 1980 as a result of the article in the *Irish Independent* newspaper.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Has the Minister been made aware of the claim by Mr. Justice Hughes that not all the papers concerning Kincora were made available to him? What did those papers say, and what does the Minister have to say about it?

Mr. Cope: I am not aware of Mr. Justice Hughes having made that claim or of any papers not having been made available to him for which he asked or which he thought were relevant.

Mr. McNamara: The Minister of State will be aware of allegations that the Army informed the RUC of what was going on at the Kincora boys' home before the date that he has just given the House. Will he check those allegations? When may I expect a letter from the Secretary of State in reply to my point about forensic evidence to which he referred at the previous Question Time?

Mr. Cope: I shall certainly consider what the hon. Gentleman said in the first part of his question, although it does not change what I said in answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been signed and, as far as I know, is on its way to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he will receive it today or tomorrow.

Security

2. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security position in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I am pleased to say that since I answered a similar question on 1 February, there have been no deaths in

Northern Ireland arising from incidents directly related to terrorism. In 1989, more than 430 people were charged with serious terrorist offences in Northern Ireland and large quantities of lethal weapons, ammunition and explosives were recovered, in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. That trend has continued so far in 1990.

Mr. Ross: Is not the Secretary of State deeply concerned that the IRA has the capacity to impose its will on contractors not to carry out work for the security forces and on suppliers not to supply material that could be used in carrying out work for the security forces in Northern Ireland? That prevails especially in parts of my constituency, in south Londonderry and in Mid-Ulster. What effective steps will the Secretary of State take to resolve the problem so that people may go to work without fear and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question please.

Mr. Ross: The position is a sad but true reflection on the present security policy.

Mr. Brooke: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the IRA's threats against contractors. I pay tribute to the courage of the contractors and those who work for them, and I am delighted that the Government's building programme manages to continue despite those threats.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is the Secretary of State aware that a concerted campaign is being waged by the IRA and IRA sympathisers to discredit the Ulster Defence Regiment, many of whose members have given their lives gallantly in the fight against terrorism? Will he assure the House that he will not allow the IRA to win this propaganda battle?

Mr. Brooke: I understand the hon. Gentleman's comments. The Government continue to place great confidence in the services of the UDR. The hon. Gentleman is right that it would be wholly wrong for IRA propaganda to be effective against the UDR, and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and I confirm our support.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Secretary of State share my concern about the fact that, on "Panorama", the commander of the UDR, Brigadier Ritchie, said that UDR patrols were not briefed about Loyalist paramilitaries, but only about Republican paramilitaries? What discussions has he had since with the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and with Army authorities to ensure that the UDR will be able to enforce the law impartially in all areas where it operates?

Mr. Brooke: In the "Panorama" programme, Brigadier Ritchie said that the UDR was not routinely tasked in the context of Loyalist paramilitaries. I was asked questions about that which were not recorded in the programme. My answer, in what I describe as the invisible part of the programme, was that the RUC tasks the Army and the UDR in actions on patrol and against the terrorist threat.

Inward Investment

3. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans to attract inward investment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I look forward to an increasing trend in inward investment in the early 1990s.

Mr. Thompson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that private sector involvement in the economy of Northern Ireland is on the increase? Will he give details of new jobs created as a result of inward investment and give us an idea of the countries from which that investment is likely to come in the future?

Mr. Needham: Everyone in Northern Ireland will agree that there has been an immense upsurge in confidence in the private sector in Northern Ireland. Over the past eight years, the economy of Northern Ireland—probably for the first time this century—has been growing faster than that of the rest of the United Kingdom. In 1989, for example, 4,017 jobs were created through investment of £263 million. There is every reason to expect that that trend will continue in the early 1990s. To give my hon. Friend an example, we believe that the numbers employed in computer software will increase from 900 now to 4,500 by 1995. If the policies of this Government remain, I am sure that the private sector will continue to improve.

Mr. Beggs: We welcome the Minister's enthusiasm in his efforts to attract inward investment to Northern Ireland. Will he assure potential investors that the thousands in my constituency who are unemployed as a result of the closure of the synthetic fibre industry and of Carreras Rothman, and who face the pending redundancies at GEC-Alsthom would be happy to welcome any overseas company, whether British, European, Japanese, American or any other? Will he assure the House that the Industrial Development Board and the Northern Ireland Office will not unduly influence the choice of location by those investors?

Mr. Needham: The Government will always try to encourage companies to go where there are major problems of unemployment. The hon. Gentleman's constituency has had considerable encouragement and it will not be long before it will receive even more. The real question is whether we can continue to attract large inward investment into the Province. Looking at the potential over the next few months, I am sure that investment will be better than it has ever been.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Marshall.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, not that Mr. Marshall.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Perhaps that was a demonstration of job creation in the House as well as in the Province.

Does the Minister accept that we all want increased private investment in the north of Ireland to provide more jobs? But has he had time to read the recent report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, which paints a damning picture of the record of the Industrial Development Board, especially on inward American investment? The Minister will know that the report says that it costs £30,000 to create one job in an American firm in the north of Ireland, which is an appalling figure.

Does the Minister accept the conclusion of the council's report that what is required is a thorough examination of the Industrial Development Board's policy towards

inward American investment and an appraisal of the performance of American firms in the Province which, in the main, is well below average?

Mr. Needham: I refute the hon. Gentleman's comments in the latter part of his question. It is not true that the 9,500 people employed in American-owned companies in Northern Ireland work at a lower level of productivity or quality than people in other companies——

Mr. Jim Marshall: Read the report.

Mr. Needham: I have read the report carefully, and the hon. Gentleman should do the same. The work done by United States companies in Northern Ireland is of a high quality and level of productivity.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the amount of inward investment from the United States is disappointing, but it is starting to increase and in the not too distant future we hope to be able to make major announcements of further increases.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that inward investment in Northern Ireland will take place only so long as internationally mobile companies wish to locate in the United Kingdom? Does he agree that the adoption of the social charter, with the return of high inflation, would make that a much less likely prospect?

Mr. Needham: Absolutely.

Religious Tolerance

4. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage religious toleration in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Steps have been and are being taken to improve relations between the two sides of the community in Northern Ireland. These include measures directed at increasing contact and co-operation across the community; increasing greater mutual respect and understanding; and ensuring the existence of equality of opportunity and equity of treatment.

Mr. Allen: I know that the Minister agrees that one of the main ways in which to combat religious bigotry is to ensure that it does not get a grip in schools. I thank him for the work that he and his colleagues have done in this matter. Is he aware of the problems being encountered by integrated schools? Can he assure the House that sufficient money will be allocated to the programme to ensure that it is fulfilled? Will he take time to look at yesterday's *Belfast Telegraph*, which highlighted some of the problems, and to write to me with his views on how to counter them?

Dr. Mawhinney: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his consistent support for measures taken in Northern Ireland to try to reduce community division. I am aware that one or two of the integrated schools are having difficulty financing the borrowing that they made before they were given maintained status. I shall certainly look at the article to which the hon. Gentleman referred and write to him.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members strongly support integrated schools in the Province and that we are delighted with the measures that he has brought forward to ensure that they prosper?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. Since we last discussed the matter the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 has become law and, for the first time, parents have a third schooling option—integrated education—available to them.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: As the question is one of religion, not of culture or nationality, which can also pose problems, does the Minister agree that tolerance can come about only if there is a clear understanding of how to teach the principles of the various denominations in Northern Ireland? Will he ensure that those who teach children about religion are fully qualified in matters concerning theological inspiration?

Dr. Mawhinney: I share with the hon. Gentleman the understanding that at the heart of the Christian gospel is an emphasis on tolerance. By way of encouragement, I remind him that under the new education reform legislation, for the first time school boards of governors can bring inspectors into schools to inspect the teaching of religious education. That is a major step forward and I hope that he will welcome it.

Security Forces

5. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to improve public confidence in the security forces.

7. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what initiatives he has authorised to improve public confidence in the security forces.

Mr. Cope: The police and the Army need the support of all sides of the community to be fully effective. The Government, the Chief Constable and the GOC therefore continue to attach the greatest importance to the maintenance and improvement of confidence in the security forces by all appropriate means.

Mr. Loyden: Can the Minister say whether Brian Nelson, who is helping in the Stevens inquiry, had any connection with the security forces before his arrest?

Mr. Cope: Not without notice, but the inquiry is progressing; it is extremely thorough and is looking into all the matters that it has been asked to consider.

Mr. Ross: Now that we know that the screening of members recruited into the UDR has been unsatisfactory, does the Minister accept the suggestion of Sir John Hermon that screening should be done by the RUC?

Mr. Cope: The RUC plays a considerable advisory role in such screening for the UDR and others. But in the end the decision about who joins the British Army must be a matter for the British Army.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: May I press my right hon. Friend on this? The "Panorama" programme made serious allegations against the UDR suggesting that it was biased in favour of the Protestant community. One point that it brought out was whether the RUC is always consulted in the vetting procedure. Will he give the House an assurance

that the vetting procedure is now conducted in consultation with the RUC and that no one is allowed to join the regiment without its approval?

Mr. Cope: Yes. I thought that the "Panorama" programme was unbalanced in that it did not look at the entire record of the UDR. I assure my hon. Friend that the RUC is involved in vetting in every case. But the final decision on who joins the British Army must be a matter for the Army.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to restore and keep public confidence is for Members of Parliament not to make ludicrous statements about the actions of members of the security forces? It was unbelievable that a soldier was accused of planting an explosive device on a British Army lorry. It was an extraordinary and outrageous suggestion.

Mr. Cope: Those who jump to conclusions immediately after an incident make a great error and can contribute greatly to the lowering of confidence.

Mr. Molyneaux: When the Minister and the Secretary of State receive a copy of the Stevens report, will they publish it in the context of a Command Paper, setting out the number of persons arrested for questioning, the number of cases referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the number of persons against whom terrorist-related charges have been authorised by the DPP? Subsequently will they publish another report giving in full the number of convictions obtained in those cases?

Mr. Cope: The Stevens inquiry will report to the Chief Constable of the RUC. As such, it would not be normal to publish it. Nevertheless, I am sure that the details for which the right hon. Gentleman asked will be forthcoming.

Mr. McNamara: Does the Minister accept that the Stevens inquiry is a matter not merely of supplying information to the DPP but of gaining confidence in the security forces among all communities in Northern Ireland? Therefore, it would be advantageous for the Government to find at least part of the report that they could release to the public.

The Secretary of State said that the RUC tasks all patrols. Did the RUC task the patrol that shot the two or three men outside the bookmaker's shop in Belfast? Why can we still not have the figures for the number of patrols accompanied by the RUC? As it is only a simple logging procedure and the Government inform us that the RUC tasks all UDR patrols, why cannot we have the figures?

Mr. Cope: The Stevens inquiry will report to the Chief Constable. I have no doubt that the report will contain some information that it would not be desirable to publish, but which is for the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Chief Constable to consider. We have undertaken to consider those matters arising from the report that affect ourselves in the Northern Ireland Office. Although it is not a document for publication, I take the hon. Gentleman's points.

The shooting in the Whiterock road and Falls road area is currently under investigation, so I do not wish to add anything on that subject. On the hon. Gentleman's point about accompaniment, it remains the policy of the Government, the Army and the police to ensure that wherever possible patrols are accompanied to the maximum.

Political Structures

6. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to develop further democratic structures in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Plans for new political structures in Northern Ireland, if they are to work, need to be devised and implemented in consultation with the elected representatives who would participate in them. I should welcome talks between the political parties about these matters.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments. Now that the Conservative party is properly constituted in Northern Ireland, with over one third of all constituencies having associations up and running and with the selection of the first two parliamentary candidates under way, will my right hon. Friend confirm that in future discussions on democratic structures in Northern Ireland, local Conservatives will be represented and that if the leaders of parties in Northern Ireland are involved, our own Conservative leader will be involved, too?

Mr. Brooke: I hesitate to advise as experienced a parliamentarian as my hon. Friend, but the candidates who have been adopted are prospective parliamentary candidates. On the second part of her question, the Conservative associations in Northern Ireland have suggested that if I consult the leaders of the parties in Northern Ireland, I should be consulting my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and I can be assumed to know her views.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Might not the key to devolved government in Northern Ireland be for the Government to introduce a Bill of Rights to protect minorities, be they Protestant minorities in Catholic areas or Catholic minorities in Protestant areas?

Mr. Brooke: It would be an unusual constitutional development to introduce a Bill of Rights for only one part of the United Kingdom. However, the Government do not rule out discussion of that in the later stages of such conversations.

Drainage Schemes

9. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reassessments are being made of major drainage schemes; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Major drainage scheme proposals are subject to reassessment at various stages in their development to validate economic worth and to take note of their impact on the environment.

Mr. Bruce: In view of the great problems of flooding and with sea defences in Northern Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom, would my hon. Friend welcome, on behalf of the Province, a United Kingdomwide body to look after all our sea defences and flood relief schemes and

ensure that money was spent in the most cost-effective way to solve the problems of people being flooded out of their homes?

Mr. Bottomley: We all need to learn the lessons of where sea defences are not fully protecting people and farming. I am delighted that Department of Agriculture drainage staff in Northern Ireland have managed to stop the threats to the Myroe embankment. It would have caused great chaos if it had been breached, although it is regrettable that the nearby burn flooded. I pay tribute to the staff who have been working for four or five days in near-freezing conditions. I am sure that they take it amiss if the odd journalist watches that work on television, with his or her feet up by the fire, and criticises their work.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Minister confirm that, after the meeting on 28 November between officials of the drainage division and the planning department, he is actively considering the alternative drainage scheme to that at Altnadua, Castlewellan, and giving priority to the development and planning for the Newcastle area in general? When will the results of those discussions and negotiations be known?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman's question and others when we have further announcements to make. I can now say that we assess schemes even more effectively than in the past, and we want to ensure that we get the right balance between the interests of farmers, wildlife and the environment. People will appreciate the further improvements in schemes when they go ahead. Some suggested improvements may not meet the economic criteria, so that the environmental or green tinge does not need to be considered. If those improvements meet the economic criteria, that will be the time to ask whether they have an acceptable impact on the environment and wildlife.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Is the Minister aware that the drainage division attempted to carry out work on the beds of the Maine and Kellswater rivers during the recent fish-spawning season? Will he instruct the department's officers that that should not be done in the future? Will the Minister take urgent action to bring together under one officer all the departments concerned with drainage, including those involved with land, road, agricultural and river drainage, so that he can co-ordinate the drainage operations?

Mr. Bottomley: It would not be right to have one officer, but it is right to recognise that my right hon. Friend has appointed the same junior Minister to look after both the agriculture and environment sectors, and we should be able to see some benefits from that. However, it will not be perfect and there will still be issues to argue out.

Badgers

10. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any evidence exists of tuberculosis in badgers in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Agriculture has been monitoring badgers for the presence of bovine tuberculosis over many years and has carried out a number of field studies. Present evidence does not suggest that badgers represent a significant health risk to cattle in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the Minister for his reply. He must be aware by now of the excellent health record of Northern Ireland livestock and the good work that has been done to eradicate both brucellosis and tuberculosis from our cattle herds. Nevertheless, is not he concerned, as are many farmers who have clear herds, and have had clean herds for many years, who suddenly find an outbreak of TB with no identifiable source that can be connected with their farming operations? Will he undertake to seek the co-operation of the Department of the Environment and district councils to ensure that all badgers that are killed on our roads can be collected, taken to the Department's veterinary research laboratories and tested to eliminate the fear and establish any influence that badgers may have on the spread of TB? Will he ensure that all imported cattle from the Irish Republic are properly tested before they come into Northern Ireland and are also tested on Northern Ireland farms?

Mr. Bottomley: We need to make sure, both north and south of the border, that TB is eliminated. There was a recent brucellosis outbreak which was, I think, tracked down and eliminated. Fewer than one in 50 of the TB outbreaks could possibly be attributed to badgers. It would be totally wrong to try to eradicate badgers in Northern Ireland, when 49 out of 50 of the TB outbreaks have other causes.

By the time badgers become a significant issue, I hope that we shall have found some way of dealing with it other than eradication.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Minister agree that it would be an evasion of the truth if we were to blame the poor badger, which cannot answer back, for a problem that exists for many other reasons? I am sure that he is aware of the high incidence of bovine tuberculosis in the Newry and Armagh constituency. Will he tell the House when he will take steps to ensure that 100 per cent. compensation is given for herds with bovine tuberculosis with the same speed as 100 per cent. compensation was given for cattle with mad cow disease in Britain?

Mr. Bottomley: Let us be absolutely clear that the incidence of BSE is dramatically lower in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the United Kingdom. We shall try to keep it that way as far as we possibly can.

Were we to have gone for 100 per cent. compensation on all animal illnesses, I fear that we would not have introduced compensation in the first place for any, so we must be careful about rolling it forward into every area. The main associations with tuberculosis are markets and nosing across boundary fences. Those areas are more important than eradicating brocks.

Stevens Inquiry

11. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has raised in the Anglo-Irish Conference the allegations made in the Dail by a Cabinet Minister that the fire in the offices of the Stevens inquiry was deliberate.

Mr. Cope: The matter has not been raised in the Anglo-Irish Conference itself, but we have made the facts clear to the Irish Government through the secretariat.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that as the joint chairman of the conference made the statement in the Dail, the matter should have been raised at the conference? I thought that the conference was designed to remove megaphone diplomacy, to get greater co-operation and, above all, to achieve the promotion of public confidence in the RUC, which has again been the victim of a smear campaign, without foundation, since the fire was accidentially started by a member of the Stevens inquiry team.

Mr. Cope: There has not been a meeting of the conference since the fire. There is, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, no evidence that the fire was anything other than accidential. The Chief Constable and Mr. Stevens are both satisfied of that. The inquiry was not impeded in any way, and anybody who suggests anything to the contrary is doing a disservice to confidence in the security forces.

Coleraine Hospital

12. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if any Ministers have visited Coleraine hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: My noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale visited the hospital on 18 September last.

Mr. Ashdown: Is not it a fact that when visiting the hospital, Lord Skelmersdale described the situation as "a shambles"? If it is a shambles, does the Minister accept the necessity to produce the new options appraisal as quickly as possible? Will he, in particular, give an undertaking that that new options appraisal will be produced before the end of the current term of the healtl. board, so that the delays that would result from installing a new health board will not arise?

Mr. Needham: I agree that my noble Friend used a phrase that sums up the present state of the Liberal Democratic party. At Coleraine hospital, the proposal of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy was not accepted by the board. The board must get a value for money appraisal—the right hon. Gentleman is well aware of that—and that will be done as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bowis: When the Minister is visiting that and other hospitals, will he note the number of patients suffering from lung cancer and analyse the number of those whose lung cancer was caused by childhood smoking? Will he redouble the Government's efforts in Northern Ireland to stop the availability of cigarettes to under-age children?

Mr. Needham: Yes, and I shall pass on my hon. Friend's message to my noble Friend.

Mr. William Ross: Will the Minister confirm that it is still the Government's intention to provide quickly an acute hospital in Coleraine with the full range of services? Is he aware that that is a key part of the whole structure of acute hospitals in Northern Ireland and that a replacement for the present hospital is long overdue?

Mr. Needham: Yes, it is the Government's intention to produce new acute care facilities across the whole range in Coleraine as soon as practicable.

Rural Housing

13. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken to improve housing in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am determined that the problems of rural unfitness shall be tackled successfully. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has now identified rural priority areas containing high concentrations of unfit rural housing. Rural action teams are being set up to provide increased assistance and advice to home owners so as to achieve improvements.

Mr. Kirkhope: I congratulate the Government on the overall level of grants for housing in Northern Ireland. Has the Minister considered the feasibility of replacement grants for rural dwellings?

Mr. Bottomley: The staff of the Housing Executive will welcome the tribute that my hon. Friend has paid, in effect, to its work and to its proposals which have been adopted. Just replacement would destroy some of the heritage, so that is one Housing Executive proposal that we have not automatically adopted.

Much of the work of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society in trying to make sure that it is possible to rehabilitate housing in rural areas and elsewhere is greatly welcomed.

Perhaps we can find an effective way of giving people in rural communities a proper choice, rather than saying that their old homes must be swept away.

Mr. Hume: May I welcome the Minister's statement congratulating the Housing Executive on the work that it has done, particularly in urban areas? Will he acknowledge that public representatives of my party have repeatedly made representations about the unfitness of rural housing, and particularly about the suggested replacement grant? We have also suggested an integrated rural development plan—including industry—based on agriculture, alternative land use and tourism. Have the Government submitted such a plan to Brussels in the context of the five-year development programme?

Mr. Bottomley: First, I shall do as the hon. Gentleman asks and pay tribute to the constructive suggestions that have come from his party and from other legitimate parties in Northern Ireland. The practical suggestions that have been put forward are being considered.

I do not want to go into too great detail, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's initiative, in putting the departmental committee together, will bring forward ideas for rural improvement that will ensure that the work of the Government and their agencies will be better co-ordinated, so that there is a real improvement in rural areas, especially for women.

Mr. Stott: May I also pay tribute to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the way in which it has developed a non-sectarian lettings policy and genuinely improved housing in Northern Ireland, especially in the

towns and cities? Can the Minister expand a little on what plans he has to stop the depopulation of the rural areas in which housing is an acute problem?

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful for that Opposition tribute to the Housing Executive. It has achieved some dramatic changes over the past 10 or 20 years.

It is not for the Government to decide how many people should live where. It is for the Government to find ways of helping people to earn their prosperity.

That is the key to people going to live in rural communities and keeping the infrastructure—schools, hospitals and so on—going, so that people have a better life. We do not want a flight to Belfast or Derry.

Republic of Ireland Ministers

14. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next proposes to meet Ministers of the Republic of Ireland; and what topics he will discuss.

16. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I plan to meet Ministers of the Republic of Ireland very shortly. Among the subjects for discussion will be cross-border security co-operation, political matters and the confidence of the community in the security forces.

Mr. Hunter: In attempting to reassure those of us who are becoming increasingly cynical about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to explain what he regards as the main advantages or benefits to come from these discussions with Ministers of the Republic and from the agreement itself?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend maintains a persistent theme in the questions that he asks on these occasions. Anglo-Irish relations have been transformed by the agreement. There has been increased co-operation in a wide range of areas, including security. We shall continue to seek to enhance progress. The conference provides a valuable forum for the discussion and resolution of difficult issues.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the concern expressed by the Irish Government about the Ulster Defence Regiment, following the "Panorama" programme, and of the failure of the British Government to honour the commitment that all UDR patrols should be accompanied by a regular policeman, is it any wonder that the UDR is widely perceived as a sectarian force almost akin to the old B specials? Will the Government therefore abolish the UDR?

Mr. Brooke: The Minister of the Irish Government who is my co-chairman of the conference expressed his views on the UDR during the programme, rather than after it. I look forward to discussing those views with him when I meet him shortly.

As for the commitment to which the hon. Gentleman referred, I refer him back to the wording of the communiqué issued after the Hillsborough agreement.

Mr. Gow: Is it the purpose of my right hon. Friend to strengthen or to weaken the union, or is he agnostic? If an assembly in Edinburgh would injure the union, why would an assembly in Belfast strengthen it?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend knows well that he and I are proud to belong to the Conservative and Unionist party, but he will also know from previous exchanges that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I consider that what is needed are the appropriate constitutional arrangements in the two countries.

Larne-Corr's Corner (Dual Carriageway)

15. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to seek European Community aid to complete the dual carriageway between Larne and Corr's Corner.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The existing single carriageway section of the Belfast-Larne road is adjudged capable of carrying projected traffic flows for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Forsythe: With the importance of Larne to the economy of Northern Ireland, being the one real route between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, surely, after 20 years' waiting, we should have the continuation of the dual carriageway from Corr's Corner to Larne. As last year the port carried 90 per cent. of the traffic between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, it is time that we had that dual carriageway.

Mr. Bottomley: The traffic flows will be reflected in the Department's proposals. I should also like to build dual carriageways all the way to Derry and Enniskillen, and probably round Lough Neagh as well.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had a meeting with the President of the European Parliament and I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet. I also had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Watson: Does the Prime Minister recall saying recently that once people got used to the poll tax, they would wonder why they had not had it before? Is she so out of touch that she is unaware that in Scotland, where it has already been in operation for a year, it is as unwanted, as unaccepted and as unpayable for many families as it ever was?

The Prime Minister: It is a very much fairer system than domestic rates, which preceded it. That was evident after the rating revaluation of domestic rates. It is patently unfair that under the previous system only half of those who had votes with local authorities paid rates. They had to carry the burden for the rest. That was the primary unfairness. The second was that under the rating system a

single person in one house paid the same rates as four or five people in the next-door house. That, too, was patently unfair.

Mr. McCrindle: Has the Prime Minister noticed that both the London Business School and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research have been predicting over the past few days that the level of inflation is likely to reduce to about 4½ per cent. by the turn of next year, and that mortgage rates are likely at the time to be under 10 per cent.? Does the Prime Minister agree that at least as much significance should be placed upon those medium-term predictions as on the understandable gloom occasioned by a month of admittedly bad trade figures?

The Prime Minister: In view of my hon. Friend's question, I am doubly glad to see him return to the House. The rate of inflation and mortgage rates will be likely to fall if we stick to a high rate of interest in the coming months in order to cut the money supply and get down inflation. We must do that until the rate of inflation comes down, when other things will follow.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the Prime Minister any plans to make an official visit to West Oxfordshire?

The Prime Minister: No; I rather wish that I did, to explain a thing or two.

Mr. Kinnock: I hope that that signifies a new readiness on the part of the Prime Minister to listen. Perhaps she should reconsider her decision and go to West Oxfordshire to meet the Conservative councillors who resigned the whip last night, explaining that they were resigning

"in protest at the Government's local government policies in general and those on housing and the community charge in particular."

When her own councillors are blaming her Government, is not it clear that the Prime Minister is running out of friends and excuses?

The Prime Minister: But not of explanations of the facts. Of course, I know that the right hon. Gentleman is never perturbed by facts. The facts are that the community charge of £412 is very high and that the situation is made worst of all by gross overspending by the Labour-Liberal-controlled Oxfordshire county council. The council's standard spending assessment, agreed by Government, was up by 12 per cent.—of course, revenue support grant is paid on that—but it is spending £96 per adult above that increase. That accounts for the larger share of the increase in the community charge.

Mr. Kinnock: I hear what the Prime Minister says. Does she realise that she is merely proving the point made by a Tory councillor who resigned the whip last night, when he said that any tax that requires so much explanation must be bad?

Hon. Members: Roof tax.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman always prepares his supplementary questions before he has heard the previous answer. My explanation was very simple and very brief. The Labour-Liberal Oxfordshire county council is increasing its spending by nearly three times the rate of inflation. That is Labour-Liberal policy. They wanted to set the community charge at the highest possible level, hoping that the people would blame us instead of themselves—the Labour-Liberal majority—on whom the blame should rest.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that about 70 Conservative Members have said that they feel that education expenditure should now be transferred to central Government, and will she give further earnest consideration to the possible advantage of that move?

The Prime Minister: First, I do not think that it would be right for the administration of education to be transferred to central Government. That would be a retrograde step. I prefer our own policy of having grant-maintained schools and of putting budgets to the local schools so that parents and teachers may have a bigger say. But if education were to be transferred, of course, a goodly proportion of the revenue support grant and of the business rate would have to be transferred with it; otherwise we should have a colossal increase in income tax, and that would suit no one. I fear that if we were to do without transferring the revenue support grant, the local authorities would only fill up that expenditure with other measures and we should finish up with both a high community charge and high income tax, which would be totally wrong.

Q2. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: In view of the popular uprising in West Oxfordshire by reformist elements in the Tory party against unjust and unresponsive government, will the Prime Minister grant the request for perestroika in regard to the poll tax? Will she, or did she, put a call through to the Foreign Secretary in Budapest this week and instruct him to consult the Communist old guard as to what to do in the present circumstances?

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. McFall: Will the Prime Minister be kind enough to say to the Foreign Secretary that it is now safer to walk in Budapest than in Berkshire or Oxfordshire?

The Prime Minister: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman studied his question for a long time. My hon. Friends in West Oxfordshire are undoubtedly wishing that Oxfordshire county council was under good Tory control, in which case they would have a very much lower community charge. Had the spending been in line with the Government's assumption, the charge would have been £253, which is a great deal less than what is being charged, largely because of Oxfordshire county council.

Q3. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Couchman: Will my right hon. Friend remind those of our right hon. and hon. Friends who are opposed to the giving of British passports to certain key Hong Kong residents that Britain is obliged under the 1984 joint declaration to hand over Hong Kong in 1997 as a successful and prosperous place, as it is now, and that the

best way to ensure that is to give reassurance to the managerial, professional, administrative and entrepreneurial backbone of the colony?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that our duty to the people of Hong Kong is, when the lease terminates in 1997, to hand over the colony of Hong Kong to China in a good and prosperous state. That will be most valuable to China and most likely to enable the people in the colony to continue their present way of life as under the Anglo-Chinese agreement.

We have a duty—my hon. Friend is correct—to give passports and British citizenship to two groups of people——

Mr. Allen *rose*——

The Prime Minister: —those who have been employed by the British administration in Hong Kong, who will stay loyally at their posts until the lease is terminated——

Mr. Bell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is intolerable behaviour.

The Prime Minister: If I am asked questions, Mr. Speaker, I submit that I must be allowed to answer them.

The second group is vital to the prosperity of Hong Kong. I refer to the entrepreneurs who built it up and who will keep it prosperous. For them to stay there, it is necessary to keep prosperity in the colony. For them to stay there, I believe that it is necessary to give them British citizenship.

Mr. William Ross: If the Prime Minister is giving some consideration today to local government finance, will she reflect today and over the weekend upon the fact that although local government can manage to obtain quite a lot of central Government help when major disasters such as the present flooding strike, there is precious little for the individual, who in many instances suffers grievously from such natural disasters? Is not it long past the time when the Government and the nation should have considered setting up some form of emergency fund to help individuals who suffer grievous damage as a result of natural disasters? Surely that would be in the interests of the community. Far too much damage has been suffered already this year.

The Prime Minister: I have three points to make in answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. First, in so far as extra expenditure falls on the local authority, he will be aware of the Bellwin rules, which have been invoked in Wales, and of other specific grants that may be available under different headings. Secondly, in so far as there is great personal loss through the loss of household possessions or damage to houses, one would expect that to be covered largely by insurance. Thirdly, in some places there is a disaster fund, which meets exceptional difficulty and exceptional hardship suffered by local people.

Q4. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. King: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the Government's commitment to a good roads programme and to the policy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport? Will she join me in welcoming a balanced transport infrastructure, which is necessary for an economy such as ours, which is growing? Will she reflect on the statement by the Opposition spokesman on transport, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), that a Labour Government would abandon the entire programme?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. It is vital for economic growth that we have good transport systems. The roads report that was produced last week gave details of about 500 schemes that will assist the rate of economic growth and reduce the number of road accidents, which we are always anxious to do. The many bypasses that have been announced will help to keep heavy lorries out of our villages and towns. It is an extremely good programme.

Q5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: When will the Prime Minister face the fact that she and her hated poll tax will be defeated by a combination of people power in Scotland and deepening electoral unpopularity in England and Wales? If the Prime Minister is not concerned about losing the Mid-Staffordshire by-election and about the resignation of 18 Tory councillors in Oxfordshire, will she at least listen to the increasing number of Tory Members who are beginning to realise that by voting for the poll tax they were like turkeys voting for an early Christmas?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recall what happened in Scotland when we had the result of domestic revaluation of rates after only some seven years. Of course, it would be 17 years if it occurred in England. There was such an outcry that we were bound to take some action to alleviate the result, and we were also bound to agree to change from the domestic rating system. We changed to a community charge, which on the whole is working well in Scotland, and is infinitely preferable to the Labour proposal for a roof tax based on capital values of houses, regardless of whether owner-occupiers or tenants live in them, modified by reference to income tax, which means that everyone's affairs will have to be revealed to the local authority. Labour's proposals are the worst of all, and people would welcome the community charge in comparison.

6. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kilfedder: May I refer to an important matter that should have the support of the whole House—the visit yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Bradford, where she launched the people in cities programme and the allocation of a further £500 million for that problem? Will she ask the organisers to consider how radical changes have been made to Belfast, because I think that that would be advantageous when they consider what the Prime Minister has in mind for inner cities in Britain?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Our action for cities programme, particularly

that introduced in the past two years, and now the launch of the people in cities programme, has been very successful. The inner cities have been transformed, unemployment is falling rapidly, we have close co-operation between industry, commerce and the cities and I hope that more people will go to each city to see the transformation that has taken place and to applaud it.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 5 MARCH—Remaining stages of the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill.

Motion on the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 6 MARCH—Opposition Day (10th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Balance of Payments Deficit, High Interest Rates and the Impact on Industry".

Motion on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order.

WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH—Debate on the first report Session 1989-90 of the Select Committee on Members' Interests (HC 135).

THURSDAY 8 MARCH—Second Reading of the Food Safety Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 9 MARCH—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 12 MARCH—Until about seven o'clock motion on the Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order.

Afterwards, motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order which is a consolidation measure.

Mr. Grocott: Can the Leader of the House tell us when the motion will be put down for the debate on the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests? It is an important issue and we need to know about it early.

Once again, the Government are raising the important issue of putting up prescription charges by means of a written parliamentary answer. That is totally unacceptable and we want the Secretary of State in the House to explain once again why the Government are putting this tax on people's sickness.

Is not it high time that we had a debate in the House to discuss the issues being debated outside the House by the people in the real world, in particular the Prime Minister's arrogance and incompetence on the poll tax, which she showed once again this afternoon? When can we have a debate on the poll tax? At least by resigning the 18 councillors in West Oxfordshire showed more guts than the Cabinet. Is not it time that we had the Prime Minister here to talk about the poll tax? It is her poll tax and she should be here to account for it. Is not it also high time that she came here to discuss other issues, particularly mortgage rates?

As the Prime Minister has spoken in debate in the House on only three occasions since the general election—from her performances, we can understand her reluctance to appear more frequently—is not it high time that she came to the House? This is her Government and these are her policies and she should be here to be accountable for them.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One of the matters that has been most striking to public opinion generally is that the Leader of the Opposition has made no significant major speech in public since last October. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gives an account of herself and the Government's policies, and very effectively too, twice a week at Question Time to hon. Members on both sides of the House. If the Opposition wished to debate the community charge, they could have selected it for their debate next week.

The proposed increases in prescription charges are modest and they are being announced in the same way as they were last year and on at least two previous occasions. The regulations that have been laid today could give rise to a debate if that were desired. It is important to emphasise that those who are least well off should be effectively protected. More than 75 per cent. of prescription items are dispensed free of charge.

I recognise that next Wednesday's debate on Members' interests is an important matter. I have already undertaken wide-ranging discussions about the form of the motion and I intend to table the appropriate motion on Monday.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Following the splitting by the Government of the old Department of Health and Social Security, has my right hon. and learned Friend come to any conclusions to put before the House about the future of the Select Committee on Social Services, which monitors for the House more than half the Government's expenditure?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have come to no conclusion in support of any departure from the present arrangements. My hon. Friend will understand that the existing Select Committee structure has been functioning for some time. I have received no representations, certainly from the Opposition, about any change in the present structure.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As there has not been a debate in the Scottish Grand Committee so far this Session, here or in Edinburgh, as the Leader of the House will be aware, when might we expect such a debate? If he is looking for a subject matter, I understand that my right hon. and hon. Friends and, I suspect, the Scottish National party will happily discuss local government finance, even if, understandably, some other parties in the House are not so keen to do so.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman may not know that some weeks ago the Government offered the prospect of a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh this month, in two or three weeks' time. The Government specifically suggested local government finance as a topic for discussion there, but, not surprisingly, the official Opposition thought that that was not a suitable subject for debate, as the last thing that they want to discuss is the roof tax in Scotland.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): In view of the constant attacks from the Opposition and in the press on the 24 million people who hold car driving licences, quite apart from the 1 million people employed in the motor industry, will my right hon. and learned Friend give us time for a debate so that we can set out what the motor industry is doing to meet the claims of the environment, how it intends to carry that work forward and how those engaged in business use their cars for business purposes?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has a long and expert acquaintance with that subject and is right to bring it to the attention of the House. I cannot offer him the prospect of an immediate debate, but I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): May I reinforce the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) for a debate in Government time on the poll tax? The Leader of the House has only 32 days to withdraw that hated scheme.

To my knowledge, no political party has ever lost 18 councillors through resignations, but if the right hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that last night's events in Oxfordshire were just a little local difficulty, he will find that when the 1 million non-payers in Scotland are reinforced in four and a half weeks' time by 10 million non-payers in England and Wales, the skids really will be under the Government.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm to discuss the community charge does not seem to be reflected in the choice of debate made by the business managers of the Labour party. That is how he could most easily achieve his objective. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear a little while ago, the central cause of the concern expressed in Oxfordshire last night was the high level of community charge levied by Labour-controlled Oxfordshire county council.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): As in reply to a written question from me yesterday my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible for monitoring the cost to local authorities of all new or extended duties placed on them by Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and departmental circulars, would my right hon. and learned Friend be good enough to arrange for the Secretary of State to give the House next week a detailed list of the extra costs resulting from Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and circulars, as the level of rate support grant for the coming year was fixed by the Government as long ago as July 1989?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that I could arrange for that performance to take place as quickly as that. The answer could most readily be derived from tabling appropriate questions or writing letters to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State tries to watch these matters very closely.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his reply about the Prime Minister speaking in a debate about the poll tax? She often says how much the Government are doing for disabled people, but recently some hon. Members, including myself, have been inundated with letters from severely disabled people who are very upset because they are losing relief for essential adaptations to the home. As they cannot move around, they are prisoners in their homes. In addition, they are paying extra poll tax. Will the Prime Minister please participate in a debate on the poll tax?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance to certain people of the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman, but I repeat the point that I made earlier: the Prime Minister, perhaps more than any other Head of Government, gives an account of herself; she answers questions twice a week from the Dispatch Box on a wide range of matters, including many on the community charge.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Will my right hon. and learned Friend promise an early debate on the latest report from the Select Committee on transport? Many of my constituents share the perplexity of members of that Committee about the negative attitude of the Department of Transport to planning the improved road and rail links that will be essential if the Channel tunnel project is not to be an economic disaster.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance that my hon. Friend attaches to that topic; indeed, he has raised it with me on these occasions more than once. I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Leader of the House accept that it is time for a major debate on the state of the fishing industry? Does he understand that this week the EC Commissioner has rejected the Government proposal for restriction of effort in the North sea, leaving the Government's proposals in total disarray? Would not a debate help by allowing hon. Members to explain to the Government why a package of assistance to catchers, merchants and processing workers is essential if we are to steer that vital industry out of its present crisis?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly bring the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I can assure the hon. Gentleman of our understanding that the fishing industry is facing a difficult year. The Secretary of State for Scotland is considering carefully a document that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation left with him recently.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): It is now two and a half months since the House debated war crimes and voted in favour of the principle of legislation. Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that a Bill will be introduced in the current Session of Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have told my hon. Friend on more than one occasion, the House expressed a clear view in favour of war crimes legislation and the Government are considering the form that legislation might take, in the light of the views expressed in both Houses. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be able to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Leader of the House aware of the deeply serious effects on Manchester's schools of the Education Secretary's capital expenditure policy? Even repairs that have been started cannot be completed and old and poor school buildings in some of the most deprived parts of the city cannot now be improved. Is he aware that next year Manchester will receive barely one tenth of what is needed and that the standard assessment could cost us more than 1,000 teachers? Can we have a statement next week about the effects of these policies on Manchester and on other hard-pressed local education authorities?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to raise specific questions about educational spending in Manchester, he should seek an opportunity of putting them to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the Government have authorised substantial expenditure on the education service and are seeking to spread it around the country as fairly as they can.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Has my right hon. Friend seen the British Rail publication entitled, "International rail services for the United Kingdom" and is he aware of the great disappointment of the North of England Regional Consortium which feels that the document does nothing very much for the north of England and that the necessary infrastructure and passengers services may not be in place in time to help the north of England when we have the Channel tunnel and the single European market? Can we please have a debate on that issue, as it is of vital importance to the north of England?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance of that issue not only for the north of England, although I have seen the position well set out in the document entitled, "The Case for the North". My hon. Friend will understand that responsibility for that matter rests not with the Secretary of State but with British Rail, which is keeping its plans under review in the light of the matters mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Allen Mckay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the Leader of the House aware of the serious disquiet and unrest among the majority of people in Britain about Government policies including the poll tax, mortgage rates, student loans, the exchange rate, the ambulance dispute and everything that affects life in Britain? Is not it time that we heard the majority of people who are saying to the Prime Minister and the Government, "Get out"? Let us test that in the House and in the country.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government are entirely happy for their reputation and record to be tested in the House as it has been already throughout this Parliament. The hon. Gentleman must understand, for example, that the ambulance dispute has been settled and we must now hope that people will return to work on the terms agreed, and the Education (Student Loans) Bill has been passed in the other place as well as in this House. No doubt the central concern of people is the level of inflation, which is why interest rates are high and will need to remain high until that is brought under control, as it undoubtedly will be.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. and learnd Friend recall that for a long time various Opposition Members have been calling for a debate on central America? Those calls seem to have disappeared in the past two days, perhaps as a result of the free and democratic elections on Sunday. Would not it be a good idea to have a debate shortly so that we can congratulate the winner of the presidential election and also the people of Nicaragua on throwing out the Left-wing Marxist Government, who were very much friends of Labour Members?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I find it easier to agree with the observations of the undecorated MacKay than the decorated McKay of the two who have just spoken. I agree with my hon. Friend that the result of the Nicaraguan elections entirely vindicates the position adopted by this Government and that we should congratulate the newly elected President of Nicaragua on her success.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I shall gladly enter the list in defence of the Sandinistas any day on which the Leader of the House wants to have an election. Sandino lives! I wear my badge with pride.

I want to ask the Leader of the House a question about elephant ivory for the simple reason that he gave me an assurance that all the Hong Kong ivory stock was legally acquired. Is he aware that I have now had a letter from the director of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department in Hong Kong which makes it clear that only 474 tonnes out of the 670 tonnes carries CITES certificates? In other words, about 200 tonnes of that elephant ivory was obtained illegally. Will he arrange for an urgent statement by the Foreign Office and an early debate so that we can discuss the discrepancies in the answer given from the Dispatch Box?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is nothing if not tenancious in his pursuit of this cause. As I said last week—and perhaps the week before and the week before that—if he has any evidence on the matter, let him produce it for the Government and the appropriate authorities, who will investigate it.

I noted the hon. Gentleman's proud badge brandishing. He is renowned as one of the most tenancious defenders of lost causes, and long may he remain so.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Is not there an inconsistency in that the Government and the House support and cheer the advance of democracy in eastern European countries, for which we have no constitutional responsibility, and yet deny it in Hong Kong, where we have constitutional responsibility? Is not it, therefore, important for the Government urgently, before we publish the Bill that is expected to come before the House, to give us a statement on why people in Hong Kong should be denied democracy or why they are unsuitable for democracy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Few issues have been more frequently and more fully discussed in the House than the issue raised by my hon. Friend. The background was set out most fully in a letter from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary which was sent to all parliamentary colleagues as recently as 9 February.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): The Leader of the House will be aware of the enormous damage done to many parts of England, Scotland and Wales by the recent gales and hurricanes. Is he aware of the devastating effect on the fishing industry in Northern Ireland, especially on the ports of Ardglass and Kilkeel in my constituency and on Portavogie in the neighbouring constituency? Since early December, three months ago, those fleets have not had a catch worth talking about. In addition, the Department of Social Security introduced new regulations on 10 December preventing the fishermen from claiming adequate supplementary benefits. Will he ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as a matter of urgency, to make a statement to the House so that the grave financial hardship of those fishermen and their families can be dealt with?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House is, of course, aware of the widespread adverse impact of recent storms and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has taken this opportunity of bringing to the attention of the House the concerns of his constituents in particular and of Northern Ireland generally. I cannot offer the prospect of an early debate on the matter, but I shall bring his special concern to the direct attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in discussions with our hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities on the subject of transitional relief for the community charge in certain areas, especially centres of tourism, there has been identified what is now known as the Torbay anomaly? About half a dozen resorts have been penalised through the SSA because of the very low Government funding for, and recognition of, the very high standards those resorts provide for visitors both from this country and from overseas. Is my right hon. and learned Friend prepared to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who raised the issue a few moments ago, and to have the Minister come to the House next week to try to thrash out a new arrangement for transitional relief for community chargepayers in those places?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot undertake a response precisely along the lines that my hon. Friend requests. No doubt he is more familiar with the details of the Torbay anomaly than I am. But I shall certainly bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The Leader of the House announced that on Monday we shall debate a proposal to renew the regulations covered by the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers Compensation) Act. That Act also covers sufferers from byssinosis, which is a disease prevalent among textile workers. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that a simple renewal of the regulations will not be enough to meet the complaints of many hundreds of textile workers, including 300 in my constituency, who have not been able to claim because the regulations are so tightly drawn? Is there any possibility of discussing the regulations properly so that they can be amended when they come before the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the debate on the regulations will not give the House an opportunity to amend them. The regulations apply to people disabled by diseases such as pneumoconiosis. I am afraid that I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman how far that range extends. The regulations to be debated on Monday are intended to increase the amount paid under the relevant Act, although, again, I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman how widely that increase will extend. Given the hon. Gentleman's substantial parliamentary ingenuity, he should be able to find an opportunity to raise the matter during the debate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Attorney-General has taken the unusual course this afternoon of publishing a statement on prosecutions arising out of the unpublished House of Fraser report by means of written answer to a question tabled late last night. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman therefore think that it might be appropriate—next week or any other week—to have a formal statement made by a Minister in the House, as there are a multitude of questions on this issue that must be answered at some time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be answering questions in the House on Monday week and I shall draw my hon. Friend's question to his attention.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Leader of the House consider arranging for a debate, at the earliest possible moment that is suitable to the Government and the Opposition, on the abolition of hare coursing? Is he aware of the growing opposition to this practice? The polls have shown that the overwhelming majority of people oppose it, as do a growing number of hon. Members, including many Conservative Members. Is not it time that the Government gave us another opportunity—given the long period of time that has elapsed—to have a debate on the matter and to reach a decision? It is a vile and evil practice and Sir Thomas More, who is commemorated by a plaque in the House, said in his "Utopia" that it ought to be abolished. It was being opposed as long ago as that.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If that view has been expressed for as long as that, I do not feel overwhelmed by the case for reaching a conclusion about it next week. More seriously, I know of the hon. Gentleman's long interest in this topic. He introduced a private Member's Bill on it many years ago. It is something which it would be appropriate to raise on the Adjournment or in a similar way.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon and learned Friend aware that since the subject was raised at business questions last week, a further 20 hon. Members have indicated their support for the transfer of educational expenditure? Will he take that point on board and arrange for a debate on the earliest possible occasion?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will remember that since the matter was raised last week, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has answered questions about it at least once. I come back to the central point that must face anyone who advocates the transfer of such burdens. If a burden is transferred from one place to another, that burden is not avoided. One must reflect carefully on the way in which it is done.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): As one who has been taught to be thankful for small mercies, may I thank the Leader of the House for the extended time for the first two Northern Ireland orders to be debated on Monday week? Following the useful East-West debate last Thursday, does he hope in the near future to come to the House with means to provide funds for the emerging democratic parties in eastern Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As one who has learned to be thankful for thanks, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his appreciation of the arrangements that we have made for Monday week. The specific point that he raised was referred to in the debate on East-West matters. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is considering the matter carefully.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to the excellent question of my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), can my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that we shall have a debate on the excellent election results in Nicaragua as soon as possible? In her message to the new President, did the Prime Minister point out that this will not be the last time that a good woman beats a cocky socialist who thought that he was ahead in the opinion polls?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to encourage people to draw that conclusion from the encouraging result in Nicaragua.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): The Leader of the House knows that many people in Britain are worried about the sinister activities of Colin Wallace and Oleg Gordievsky, but what about Nonna Longden? Not so long ago Mrs. Longden was arrested in my office. She was there illegally and shortly afterwards the contents of my House of Commons locker were removed. I can tell the House that Mrs. Longden was not an innocent

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask for a debate or a statement, or something of that kind.

Mr. Brown: Mrs. Longden worked for Defence Systems, which has links with MI5 and MI6. Rupert Murdoch's minions paid £45,000 to bribe her to commit perjury and to concoct a smear story for the *News of the World*. Therefore, can we have a wide-ranging debate on the security aspects—*[Laughter]* it is a serious matter—of the state and about the threats and intimidation that hon. Members experience? It is an important matter.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I am not as well acquainted as the hon. Gentleman with the details of that lady's activities. The one answer that I can give with confidence to his question is, "Not next week".

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time in the near future for a debate on sea defences and flooding matters? I have been in touch with our local SCOPAC—the standing conference on projects associated with the coastline—which comprises 13 local authorities that have got together to ensure that sea defence matters are dealt with in an acceptable, unified way. In the three years that I have been in the House, we have never discussed flood relief and sea defences. As the subject has so many interdepartmental implications should not we have a national, unified approach to it so that all the money that the Government have voted for the problem will be properly used?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Again, I cannot offer a promise of an early debate on that topic, but I assure my hon. Friend that his point is well worth making. The adequacy of sea defences is most often considered after they have proved to be inadequate in one place or another. I shall bring my hon. Friend's point to the attention of several of my right hon. Friends who are concerned with the matter and they will reflect on it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Leader of the House yet discussed with the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee the wage levels in the Refreshment Department of the House of Commons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have said on more than one occasion, and as you know well, Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons Commission has a statutory obligation to keep the pay and conditions of its permanent staff, not only in the Refreshment Department, in line with those in the Civil Service. That obligation is fulfilled in respect of all permanent staff of the House, including those in the Refreshment Department.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I should like to ask my right hon. and learned Friend a question in connection with the business for next Tuesday. I have received information from the Conservative group on Lancashire county council that our community charge could be £16 less if the county had not chosen to top up its coffers; a further £20 less if the county council would face up to issues relating to the running of its old people's homes, and a further £3·50 less if it addressed matters relating to secondary education. To that end, and because the Opposition have chosen not to debate the community charge next Tuesday, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that such information could be obtained by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities and printed in the record so that we can all learn the facts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is extremely assiduous in raising the activities of Lancashire county council in the House. As a result of his skill in doing so yet again this afternoon, the facts that he has reported will be recorded in the *Official Report*.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The right hon. and learned Gentleman may recall that at last week's business questions I made a plea for a statement to be made by the Secretary of State for Social Security on the consequences of the High Court judgment on the social fund? That judgment, along with the recent Appeal Court judgment in the case of McKiernon *v.* the Secretary of State for Social Security, has profound implications for many claimants. If a statement cannot be made on those two cases, could a copy of the advice that is to be sent from the chief adjudication officer to local adjudication officers also be sent to me and could another copy be placed in the Library?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot answer that specific question this afternoon. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will be in the House to answer questions on Monday. He may or may not be confronted with that question then.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): If, as he has said on two or three occasions, the right hon. and learned Gentleman really believes that the trouble with the poll tax is the high rates set by Labour councils in Oxford and elsewhere, why does not he have a debate about it next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Because Opposition Members seem to be expressing a great deal more concern about it than do my hon. Friends—and they have Opposition supply days on which they can choose to debate the subject whenever they please.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In view of the large and justified protests about the poll tax all over the country, and not least in Conservative constituencies, is it possible to have a debate and a free vote on the poll tax because undoubtedly in any free vote the poll tax would be overwhelmingly rejected by the House as it would by the

[Mr. David Winnick]

Cabinet if it had a secret vote? Would the Secretary of State for Wales, for example, vote in favour of the poll tax in a secret vote in the Cabinet?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must have forgotten that the community charge has been the subject of many debates in the House in the last couple of years and that it is on the statute book as a result of those debates. I repeat that it remains open to the Opposition to choose a date for the discussion of that topic whenever they please.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why will not the Leader of the House reconsider his decision to have a debate about the new disease, the galloping poll tax? Why will he not give his hon. Friends who are complaining about the poll tax a chance? Is he aware that in Derbyshire the rates have increased by 24·9 per cent. as a result of the standard spending assessment because the Government did not take into account inflation at 8 per cent., but used the figure of only 4 per cent., and because they did not take into account the police rent allowance or the massive loan debt from the 15 per cent. interest rates? Those are the reasons why the assessments are so low. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not have a debate, we shall have to consider a censure motion on the poll tax.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall consider no such thing. The most important factor that has emerged from the hon. Gentleman's contribution is his anxiety at the high rate of community charge that is being imposed by the Labour council under which he suffers.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): As a trustee for the Campaign for Homeless and Rootless People, known as CHAR, may I ask when we will have a debate on homelessness and the needs of organisations such as CHAR which look after homeless people? Meanwhile, would the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a humane man from similar origins to mine, be good enough to come across the river one evening, before or after a debate, to cardboard city at Waterloo, where I spent part of last night? He could then see the need for such a debate, and the anguish, hardship and destitution in which hundreds of people live so very near to the Palace of Westminster.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the Government and hon. Members from both sides of the House are concerned about homelessness and wider issues affecting the inner cities. He will know that the spending on the Government's action for cities initiative will increase from just under £3·5 billion in the last financial year to about £4 billion in the next financial year. That is a measure of our concern about this subject.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Could we have a debate next week about election law and expenditure? We could then discuss the way in which the Prime Minister abuses taxpayers' money by mounting circus operations in, for example, Bradford, to try to prop up receding Tory fortunes by creative accounting of inner cities money, when the Government have refused financial assistance to the textile industry, which is in great difficulties because of the privatised water charge increases. The local education authority is in crisis because it has been denied necessary capital expenditure, while the city technology college is being built with taxpayers' money and is costing more than the total amount received for capital expenditure in the current year by the other 300 schools in the area. Is not it time to discuss this abuse of taxpayers' money and to make the Prime Minister more accountable for it, so that it can be charged against election expenditure?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the hon. Gentleman is as impressed as he appears to be by the way in which my right hon. Friend draws attention to the successes of Conservatives in the city of Bradford, so much the better.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday was the closing date for the consultation period organised by the Department of Transport on the document, "Traffic in London" and the four traffic assessment studies? In that short period since 14 December, thousands of people have written in objecting to any road building in London and have instead requested that resources be put into improving public transport. Will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Transport to come to the House soon and say that all the road-building schemes proposed in the assessment studies have been cancelled and the resources put instead into improving public transport and making London a clean and safe place to live, not a building site for motorway contractors and a city suffering from the pollution that will follow as more cars are attracted to the city?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend and the Government are concerned to secure effective arrangements for transportation in inner London, Greater London and the City of London. He is therefore seeking, in consultation with those concerned, to achieve and maintain a balanced policy. The one characteristic of the hon. Gentleman's intervention is that it appears to be wholly unbalanced.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): In view of the Prime Minister's statement in West Yorkshire yesterday about the extra spending that will take place on the inner city programme, does the Leader of the House agree that we should have a statement next week from the Prime Minister to follow up the points that she made in Bradford? We can then extract from her what will happen about housing in the inner cities particularly, and the urban and rural areas in general. Can we have a statement about how much of the money allocated for inner cities is designed to provide affordable houses in the inner cities, as well as the urban and rural areas?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will be glad that my right hon. Friend's statement yesterday on this topic has commanded such wide attention. The increases in expenditure, which I have just described, are giving rise to a massive growth in investment in new factories, roads, offices and housing in inner cities. In the two years since the Government launched the inner cities initiative, unemployment in inner cities has fallen by one third.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Labour party had the opportunity to choose the community charge as the subject for debate at the next meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee on Wednesday 14 March but chose not to do so? Does he

think that that might have had anything to do with Labour's alternative community charge or, rather, its lack of one?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that it was due to the point that was helpfully made by my hon. Friend as well, no doubt, as to the great skill with which the Secretary of State for Wales and those who support him in the Principality are governing the Principality.

Welsh Affairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

4.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): Hon. Members in all parts of the House will regret that this debate takes place today at a time when a number of people in the Principality are suffering from the dreadful effects of high tides and winds and the storm damage.

I begin by reporting on the latest situation. I am pleased to say that the tides today are far less than they were earlier in the week and that further flooding has not resulted. Many problems must be met. About 2,000 people have been evacuated, and hon. Members will join me in paying tribute to those who have worked hard and effectively in tackling the problems involved.

The Minister of State visited the site earlier in the week and discussed the problems with various people. We have sent from the Welsh Office the senior engineer, who I feel is the person most suited to give professional advice and to examine the detail of some of the problems that are, and will be, involved. Again, hon. Members in all parts of the House will be delighted that their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales have visited the distressed areas today. Their visit will be much appreciated and welcomed.

Some of the problems have involved the rail link, a matter of particular concern to Anglesey and elsewhere. We have been in contact with British Rail, which is determined to get the rail link in order and proceeding as quickly as possible. BR is unable yet to assess the full extent of the damage but has organised the resources that will be required to bring a speedy reconnection of the activities on that important link.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends totally with the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about the situation, about the splendid work of the emergency services and about the efforts that are being made by everybody to put everything right as soon as possible.

The right hon. Gentleman correctly says that the rail link is of supreme importance to, for example, the island of Anglesey. Can he say, from the communications that the Minister of State has had with British Rail, whether it will be days, weeks or months before that vital link is restored?

Mr. Walker: Neither I nor British Rail can give the hon. Gentleman a definite answer to that question. Until BR has assessed the nature of the damage, it is impossible to answer definitely. The line is, in parts, completely flooded. Depending on the damage, BR would hope that it would be a matter, if weeks, of one or two weeks, or days, but I do not want to commit BR when it has not properly assessed the damage and the extent of it. However, I know from having spoken to BR that it is determined to get the service back at the earliest possible moment and will commit all the necessary resources to achieve that purpose.

I shall be going there early next weeek to meet the local authorities concerned and to discuss, having had reports from our engineers, the nature of what is involved. As always, alas, in distressing cases of this kind, personal

[Mr. Walker]

hardship will be involved. There will be people who are uninsured or underinsured and serious damage faced by families in financial distress.

In that context, I am glad that the mayor of Colwyn has launched an appeal fund, and I know that he has had an early and good response. I felt that it was appropriate in the circumstances that the Welsh Office should make a contribution to that fund, and we have informed him of that. As yet, the trustees have not been appointed, and the trust deed has not been made. As soon as that is in place, the Welsh Office will provide a donation to that appeal of £50,000. I hope that our example will be followed by others so as to help some of the personal distress problems that will be involved in the area.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Having once experienced flooding myself I know precisely what it can mean, especially for old people. Will arrangements be made for local authorities to have gangs of workpeople who can clear up after the flooding has receded and make certain that the homes are reasonably habitable, even if they take a long time to dry out? It is all right for young people, but difficult for old people. Would my suggestion be a practical way of dealing with the problem?

Mr. Walker: I have some constituency experience of flooding myself. I represent a constituency in which there are floods most years, mainly of the cricket ground and race course, but frequently of housing, too. I know well the human problems involved, particularly for old people. I know, from what the Minister of State has said, the care that local authorities are taking with some of the problems of the old people who are involved. Early next week, I shall discuss with the local authorities the detail of what is taking place.

I need parliamentary approval for a donation to such a fund. That will be sought by means of a summer supplementary estimate. Pending that approval, the contribution will be met by a repayable advance from the contingency fund.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On the issue of coastal defences, this is not the first time that we have seen the problem: British Rail constructs an embankment to protect the railway; the embankment then becomes a barrier to protect the community; it then gives way. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the need for a full review of coastal defences so that we can ensure that such a disaster does not happen again?

Mr. Walker: I shall certainly look into any lessons that may be drawn from these floods. The matter is not one only for British Rail; local authorities are also continually involved in standards of defence. Earlier this month, when there was some damage to part of a defence wall, quite rightly there was an immediate inspection both by British Rail and the local authority. Local authorities have a fundamental duty in this respect.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I am sorry to labour the point, but it is important. The wall at Ffynnongroyw, which has been breached, was a British Rail wall. Can my right hon. Friend undertake to give British Rail extra capital help, should it need it, because it will have to replace the walls with much more susbstantial walls?

Mr. Walker: Whatever is put in as a replacement must ensure that a proper defence is maintained. Although capital allocations for sea defences are important, in terms of the total capital programme of British Rail they are relatively small. British Rail would have to discuss the matter with the Department of Transport in the annual capital programmes discussions. I am sure that British Rail will fully carry out its responsibilities. A shortage of capital will not prevent it from doing so.

This is the first debate on Welsh affairs in this decade. I should like to review some of the changes that took place in the 1980s and, more specifically, to spell out the type of actions and developments that will take place in the 1990s.

The last decade was one of considerable change in the Welsh economy, primarily due to the enormous change in the employment pattern, resulting from the decline in the number of people employed in the coal and steel industries. Over the decade, 58,000 jobs were lost in those two industries alone. The Welsh economy, like economies throughout western Europe, suffered from the general world recession that took place at the beginning of the 1980s.

Given the dramatic change, it is encouraging that so many new businesses have emerged to transform the Welsh economy during the 1980s. On the latest statistics, there were at the start of the past decade, 3,600 companies described as production and manufacturing companies; now there are 5,700—an increase of 59 per cent., which is considerably greater than that in any other region of the United Kingdom. It is also encouraging that during that period the number of self-employed in Wales increased by 36,000. In some basic services of vital importance to Wales, there was considerable progress in the last decade.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Secretary of State talks about change. The word that he should use is decline. Is he not aware that we have lost 120,000 industrial jobs? In Llanelli, half the households have an income of less than £4,500 a year, well below any civilised definition of poverty. Wales receives a higher proportion of social security benefit than any other part of Britain. It is the poorest region. That is not change; it is decline.

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman constantly does harm to his constituency and to Wales. I am glad that his own local authority does not share that description of the economy in his constituency. Many new firms have gone there. Many are expanding. If the right hon. Gentleman, for whatever purpose, wishes to continue describing his constituency as an area of depression and decline, he will do great damage to his constituents. He should think again.

In the same decade, there was an enormous increase in expenditure on health services in Wales. In real terms, in the coming year we will be spending nearly 50 per cent. more than at the beginning of the decade. There are 16 per cent. more doctors and nurses in the front line of the Health Service; 31 per cent. more in-patients and 22 per cent. more out-patients are being treated. The pay of nurses and doctors has been transformed from what it was when the Government came into office.

On housing, it is remarkable that, in that decade, one house in six in Wales benefited from improvement grants. That is why the most recent housing survey in Wales shows such a dramatic improvement in areas where housing and property were bad.

It was a difficult decade for agriculture, but, as a result of a combination of Government and other policies, milk, sheep and beef producers in Wales have been in a quite stable and tolerable position which it is vital to maintain if we are to protect the Welsh rural scene.

When I had the privilege of becoming Secretary of State, by far the biggest issue in Welsh politics was unemployment. At all Welsh Question Times and in every debate on Wales, it was the main issue. I do not believe that any hon. Member on either side of the House could have predicted the speed of the decline in unemployment that has been achieved. Certainly the Labour party could not have predicted it, because it made its own promise, which was to bring down unemployment in the United Kingdom——

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): If the same method had been used to compile unemployment figures in Great Britain as the method used in September 1982, there would be 782,000 more people on the unemployed register. What would the position be in Wales?

Mr. Walker: The figures that I gave were on the same comparable bases. The Labour party's prophecy was that, over two years, it would reduce unemployment in the United Kingdom by 1 million. If that happened, and Wales had its proportion of the reduction, it would achieve a much smaller reduction in unemployment in Wales. In two years and nine months, unemployment in Wales has been reduced by 68,000. At the time of the last general election, unemployment in Wales was 80 per cent. higher than it is today, in spite of continuing coal mine closures.

I hope that hon. Members will recognise the position in which this puts Wales: in relative terms, its unemployment is far below the average unemployment in the European Community, far below that in countries like France, and now very close to the average for the United Kingdom. There has been a reduction of 68,000 in two years and nine months. If there is a further reduction of 39,000, unemployment in Wales will be lower than, currently, it is in south-east England.

That is a remarkable transformation of the unemployment scene, which has been achieved partly by a very successful programme of inward investment. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that in 1989 we achieved an average of two inward investments a week into Wales—altogether 100 projects, providing 7,000 new jobs and £520 million of investment. We are therefore continuing the trend of the past three years, as a result of which Wales, with 5 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom, has been achieving 20 to 22 per cent. of the United Kingdom's inward investment. I should like the objective to be a further reduction of 39,000 in the number of people unemployed, so that, as a region, we shall have the lowest rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Let us look at new investments, from which the benefits of employment are still to come. The three biggest investments that I have been able to announce are those of Ford, Bosch and Toyota. In all three cases, the factories are under construction. The firms have not yet taken on their labour force or started to place orders for the component parts that they will need when they are fully in production. I estimate that those three investments alone will comprise £1 billion and that when the companies are operating fully they will have a turnover of £1 billion. I ask hon. Members on both sides of the House to reflect on the impact that that will have on the potential of components manufacturers in the Principality and its enormous impact on further job creation.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Can the Secretary of State confirm that the majority of jobs created in Wales in the 10 years of Tory government have been low-paid, part-time jobs, and that more than half of the Welsh work force earn less than £135 a week? Does he realise that in my constituency 60 per cent. of people in work live in households whose income is £4,000 a year or less? Is this a record of which he is proud?

Mr. Walker: Current earnings figures in real terms for Wales, compared with those of 1979, would be a considerable embarrassment to the hon. Lady and her party. I have just mentioned the Ford, Bosch and Toyota projects that are in the pipeline. It is strange that an hon. Member should get up and say that they and the Japanese investments will all provide low-paid, bad-quality jobs. At present, the average total earnings of a full-time worker in Mid Glamorgan, West Glamorgan or South Glamorgan are very similar to the average earnings of a worker in the west or east midlands. That shows what a lot of nonsense the hon. Lady is talking.

I should like to turn to other things that are in the pipeline for Wales.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): We accept, of course, that, over the decade, there has been an increase in real earnings. If there had not been, it would have been the first such decade since the war. Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the real increase to which he has referred is £33 a week, representing 16 per cent., or one sixth, whereas in the south-east—this is the important relativity point that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was making—the real increase has been £84, representing 37 per cent., or one third. That is double what we have achieved.

Mr. Walker: The figures are published every quarter, and I am delighted to look at the earnings of Wales compared to those of any other region of the United Kingdom. We have done exceedingly well, and we shall continue to do exceedingly well. The figures are published, and anybody can look at them. They show a very fine achievement in the case of the county in which the hon. Gentleman's constituency is located.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I think that I may be able to help the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman has presented us with the average earnings in manufacturing industry. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has spoken of the average earnings of all earners. There is an enormous difference between the two sets of figures. It seems that the Secretary of State has forgotten that, in Wales, manufacturing earnings were higher traditionally than elsewhere because of the presence of heavy industry. We have, of course, lost that advantage. As we have a lower proportion of employees in professional, administrative and technical occupations than any other part of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, our average earnings are severely depressed. There is a dependence upon low-paid, blue-collar employment. There is no white-collar employment to increase average earnings.

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. It enables me to say that, since 1984, the number of people in manufacturing employment in Wales has, unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, increased by 16 per cent. The number employed in the production of metal goods and in the engineering and vehicle industries has increased by 28 per cent. The number of new manufacturing plants in Wales has increased far faster than that in any other region in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Opposition spokesmen have made no reference to the inward investment to which my right hon. Friend is referring. An answer to a question submitted by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) shows that, in 1979, only 854 jobs were either created or saved as a result of inward investment in Wales, whereas last year the figure was 7,941.

Mr. Walker: Under this Government, inward investment in Wales has been greater than in any other region in the United Kingdom, and probably better than in any other region in western Europe.

Financial services are a transforming part of the Welsh economy. The two major announcements that I have made —the coming to Wales of the National Provident Institution and the Trustee Savings bank—will result in the building of offices. The National Provident Institution still has 400 more people to recruit. Over the years, the TSB will be recruiting a further 1,600. A number of major manufa turing concerns and major new financial service industries will be coming to Wales—these are in the pipeline—and the consequent employment benefit is yet to come.

It is important that we look to the future. I shall outline eight areas of commitment for the 1990s that collectively will effect a significant transformation of the strength of the economy. First, I shall refer to the activities of the Welsh Development Agency. I am pleased to say that, in the coming year, the spending of the agency will be just over double what it was in the financial year 1986-87. As a result, the agency is able to proceed with factory building and land clearance programmes on an unprecedented scale in the history of Wales.

The agency has announced today a property development programme that will create thousands of new jobs throughout the Principality and take us further towards our objective of Wales having unemployment as low as any region in the United Kingdom. The agency's new property development programme for the coming year will lead to the creation of 2 million sq ft of new working space throughout north and south Wales. That will be enough capacity to accommodate 6,000 new jobs.

I am glad to say that the strength of the industrial and commercial property market in Wales will enable private developers to avail themselves of the tremendous opportunities presented by the Welsh property venture, which was launched by the WDA a few weeks ago. This new initiative, so recently launched, provides private developers with the opportunity to carry out factory and office development on land that is currently in agency ownership. It is hoped that, by the mid-1990s, over 6 million sq ft of new floor space will be provided through the partnership scheme. That will be capable of accommodating 18,000 new jobs.

Since the financial year 1986-87, we have massively increased the expenditure of the WDA. This has enabled the agency to carry out a land reclamation programme which is one of the largest of its kind in Europe. It has enabled it to implement a rural strategy that will bring a new dynamism to economic development in rural areas. It has enabled it also to announce plans to take advantage of the greatly improved communications in north Wales resulting from the development of the A5. This will be of great benefit to Clwyd and Gwynedd. The agency has substantially increased resources to attract inward development. Later I shall mention some of the important international developments that are about to take place. The first facet——

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman is very patient. He is making his speech in his own way, but will he consider telling the House, before he sits down, whether he will poll-tax-cap any Welsh local authority? Does he agree with the vice chairman of the 1922 Committee that the Government should think again about poll tax? Does he not agree that his right hon. and hon. Friends are punch drunk over the tax? Will he ensure that he answers those questions?

Mr. Walker: I will answer the hon. Gentleman in passing. I find that most of my right hon. and hon. Friends are, if anything, annoyed that Wales has done so well, compared with England and Scotland, as far as the community charge is concerned. Secondly, I shall decide later this week about capping authorities, when we have the full budgets and assessments. Obviously it would be wrong to decide before that.

One of the welcome facts about this debate is that it will give the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) the opportunity to spell out in detail his party's taxation programme for the 1990s. I hope that a considerable part of his speech will be devoted to explaining the roof tax, and all the other plans that will have an impact on the people of Wales. Also—this is of great importance to Wales—it will be significant to see whether he delivers an undertaking that, if a Labour Government came to power, the differential between local taxation in Wales and that in Scotland and England would remain as it is now. We will be very interested to hear his replies, and I will interrupt him two thirds of the way through his speech, if he has not answered those points.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): On a practical point about poll-tax-capping—it is now 1 March and all local authorities are faced with billing nearly twice as many people as they used to under the old rating system. Merthyr and Mid Glamorgan have declared their poll tax, and as the information must already be available to the Welsh Office, why cannot the right hon. Gentleman get up now and say that he will not poll-tax Merthyr or Mid Glamorgan?

Mr. Walker: The final figures had to be in later today, and until that time there is no firm position. When all the figures are in, I will carefully consider the matter and will make whatever announcements are required.

I shall now return to the type of subject that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is not so interested in. No. 1 in the programme for the 1990s is the substantial programme of the Welsh Development Agency. The second factor in the 1990s will

be the completion of the second Severn bridge, and the completion of the M4 all the way through to Swansea. And a combination——

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I will give way now, but I shall not give way for a time thereafter, as I have given way a great deal so far, and it is unfair to other hon. Members.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that, after a gestation period of seven years, the Government are proceeding with the second Severn crossing project with all the speed of a tortoise in top gear? Does he also appreciate that there is also the question of tolls, which is nothing short of a scandal, and we do not know yet whether the new crossing will be in the private or public sector? Finally, in regard to the existing bridge, will he do something to get some protective covering at the sides of the bridge to prevent high-sided vehicles from overturning, because that is causing such disruption to the whole of the Welsh economy?

Mr. Walker: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's final point, I gather that there are considerable technical details involved, and I shall write to him.

I hope that orders for the second Severn bridge will be placed. There has been consultation on the route and tenders have been examined. We are now down to the last two companies and one of those will be chosen within the next few weeks. Certainly it is essential for the crossing to be completed as quickly as possible.

The combination of the second Severn bridge and the fact that British Rail intends to improve both passenger and freight services means that south Wales will have one of the best communication systems in the United Kingdom and in most of Europe. That will have a considerable impact on the economy of south Wales; that is the second factor of a committed programme for the 1990s.

The third factor is the impact on rural areas of north Wales of the completion of the A55 and other connected road schemes, and also the activities of the Development Board for Rural Wales. I should like to congratulate that board. At this moment, it is dealing with more inquiries from people considering locating small and medium businesses in Wales than has ever taken place in the history of the board. I congratulate it on the enterprise with which it has attracted the inquiries and the enthusiastic way in which it is dealing with them.

The fourth factor in the programme is the garden festival at Ebbw Vale. I hope that that will be the most successful garden festival that has ever taken place in the United Kingdom. There have been good festivals in Glasgow and elsewhere, and we have been able to learn from the good points of the exhibitions. Organisers of previous exhibitions have been very collaborative and have told people in Ebbw Vale of their mistakes as well as their successes. There is immense enthusiasm and there is colossal Government commitment to the festival, and I believe that in 1992 it will bring to Wales between 2 million and 3 million tourists and visitors and will bring to the attention of the world at large the considerable transformation that has taken place in the valleys.

The fifth factor in the programme is the development which is to take place in Cardiff bay, which is of a considerable scale and will have considerable impact on jobs. Three million sq ft of office space, 4 million sq ft of industrial space and 25,000 potential new jobs will be created. Again, the government have made a massive financial commitment to the scheme, and we look forward to the development going ahead and making an enormous impact on the capital city in the 1990s.

The sixth factor which will have an impact in the 1990s is the valleys programme. I am pleased to say that, after Easter, I shall be announcing the details of what has taken place in the period in which the valleys programme has been in operation. We will compare the promises and the undertakings made in the original statement with the performance to date, as we do every six months.

I am glad to say that, since the valleys programme was adopted, unemployment in the valleys has dropped by 11,000. It is interesting that, in the same period, the drop in unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2·6 percentage points, but Wales did better than that. Unemployment dropped by 3·4 percentage points and the drop in the valleys was 4·4 percentage points. Therefore, I have decided to extend the programme for two years, and I hope that by the end of April we will be able to publish details of the extended programme and the events that will take place in those years which will continue this important trend.

The seventh important factor is financial services. To date, that initiative has been concentrated on south-east Wales. I believe that north Wales, with its communications and connections with north-west England, will see important developments in that sphere, as will the Swansea bay area. Some of the developments likely to take place there will benefit from the injection of new financial services.

As I have said before, the benefit is still to come from some of the major investments announced to date, but I pleased to say that there are many inquiries in the pipeline from overseas banks and insurance companies as well as United Kingdom companies. I believe that growth in financial services will continue, and will probably mean that, during the 1990s, employment in that area may reach 125,000 in Wales.

The international connections that Wales has developed and is developing are of immense importance. Wales probably has the greatest concentration of Japanese investment of any region in Europe of a similar size. That will continue, and I believe that the latest investments, such as Toyota, will bring to the Principality other Japanese industries that want a presence in the European market. We have a lively and good Welsh Development International office in Japan, which is dealing with many inquiries.

We have as yet had no success in Korea, not because of any failure to impress, but due to Korea taking an interest only recently. I am glad to say that two important delegations of Korean industrialists have been to the Principality and a number of Korean firms are making positive inquiries. I am anxious that during the 1990s we should establish the some close connection with Korea that we have with Japan.

Hon. Members will have read recently of the successful mission to Saudi Arabia. A small number of Welsh firms obtained substantial exports to that area and three or four are now involved in important joint ventures there. We already have a good connection with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, which will be beneficial to us in the 1990s. Our

[Mr. Walker]

relationship with the United States remains important, and Welsh Development International recently reorganised and strengthened its team there.

One of the most important developments, that will take place later this month and which I hope will be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House is the close relationship that we shall be establishing with Baden-Wurttemberg, the most important state in the German Federal Republic in terms of its economy, industry and manufacturing, from which the Bosch investment came which made a considerable impact on the business community in Germany. We have had talks and an exchange of visits and we have now established an office in Stuttgart.

One result, among others, is that 16 Welsh firms wish to establish a joint venture and a presence in the German market and they are being positively assisted to do so. Talks are now taking place. Firms in Baden-Wurttemberg that are interested in establishing a presence in the United Kingdom market are now engaging in talks and negotiations.

The Prime Minister of Baden-Wurttemberg is anxious to establish a much closer relationship between the Principality and that important region of Germany. He will be coming to Wales on a two-day visit at the end of the month, accompanied by a strong industrial and ministerial team.

Swansea already has a twinning arrangement with Mannheim and Cardiff with Stuttgart, and that has resulted in important cultural and other connections between the two cities. I believe that we shall be able to reach a number of agreements with regard to commerce, industry, research and the interlinking of the universities between that important region of western Germany and Wales, which will be of immense economic and industrial benefit to both countries.

That is the international context for Wales during the 1990s. But central to all other areas, be it the development in the valleys, the Cardiff bay development or the WDA programme, and perhaps the most fundamental target for the 1990s is to improve facilities for training and education in the Principality.

Last year, £150 million of Government money was spent on training and education, by far the highest investment in training that has ever taken place in the Principality. In addition, I hope that the new training and enterprise councils will be operating by the end of this year. In my discussions with the chairman and the key members of the board and the education authorities, I have found considerable enthusiasm in Wales for those councils to succeed.

In less than three years, unemployment has been reduced considerably. It now stands at 6·7 per cent.—well below the level in Europe. It is still higher than in some regions in the United Kingdom, but way below many. What is in the pipeline will continue to improve that considerably, but the commitments that I have outlined to better communications, an enormous factory building programme, the Cardiff bay development, the valleys programme, the financial services programme and a positive international strategy will mean that, by the end of the 1990s, Wales will be one of the most prosperous and successful regions of western Europe.

4.54 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I congratulate the Secretary of State and those who helped to obtain the inward investment of Toyota, Bosch and Ford. I hope that we shall soon have confirmation that British Airways will be coming to south Glamorgan. Those are important developments, which mean a great deal to the future economy of Wales, and they show the adaptability, flexibility and welcoming nature of the Welsh people.

However, the Secretary of State's view of the Principality is not one that Opposition Members recognise. He did not mention how many Welsh budgets are being partially or completely destroyed by rising interest rates. Very soon, council rents will go higher and higher as a direct consequence of legislation pushed through the House only last year.

High interest rates affect business confidence, but the right hon. Gentleman glossed over that. Because of high interest rates, all small businesses in Wales are now threatened. They are under great pressure. When the right hon. Gentleman took office, he said that the economic miracle in Wales would be based on small business. But he and his Cabinet colleagues are crucifying the prospects of small businesses in Wales. Nor did the right hon. Gentleman consider for even half a minute the impact of the uniform business rate on small businesses in Wales. There have already been many and widespread complaints about that. Under the right hon. Gentleman, small businesses in Wales are having a tough time, and before long they will find the going even tougher.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): If the hon. Gentleman thinks that business in Wales will suffer great hardship in the next few months, will he explain why the director of the Cardiff chamber of commerce was reported in the *Western Mail* only two months ago as saying:

"Business prospects for this year in South Wales are good."?

He went on to say that no fewer than 76 per cent. of businesses are expecting a higher turnover in 1990.

Mr. Jones: That bears no relationship to what the CBI in Wales and the CBI in Great Britain said recently. I may as well take this opportunity to say that the hon. Gentleman will not be here for much longer. His time is coming to an end. We shall not have to suffer his injudicious interventions for much longer.

Before I was interrupted I was about to say that the Secretary of State did not mention the real problem in Wales of low pay. That will not go away because the Government's policies are not designed to achieve that. Average male earnings in Wales are the lowest in Britain and three tenths of women in full-time work in Wales earn less than £120 a week. That is a pretty miserable record after so many years of office. I understand why the right hon. Gentleman was not prepared to face up to such a stain on the Government's record in Wales.

For all the gloss and the hype that the Secretary of State is disposed to indulge in, he was not prepared to say that Government spending on social security, on sickness benefit and invalidity benefit in Wales is the highest in Great Britain. That points to real problems in the social fabric of our nation. It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to paddle through an evasive speech

when he knows that so much is going badly wrong in the Principality. The Government are trapped by their dogma. They have short-term and short-sighted policies.

I should like to address myself briefly to the challenges to Wales of 1992, of the opening of the Channel tunnel, and to Wales and Britain of the changes and revolution in eastern Europe. Before long, the Secretary of State will have to admit that the economic map of Europe will be redrawn. There will be opportunities for Wales if it continues to be adaptive and if the Government are prepared to take the opportunities offered by the new economic developments and the burgeoning new technological climate.

As the Secretary of State did not mention this in his speech, will he say what assessment the Welsh Office has made of the impact of 1992 and the opening of the Channel tunnel and, most important, what surveys have been made of the opportunities that may arise in eastern Europe? Eastern Europe might be an alternative for inward investment from continents outside Europe. I should not like to see Wales lose out from those fundamental changes.

Has the Welsh Office or the Secretary of State made any assessment of the likelihood of more steel imports when parts of eastern Europe are integrated into western Europe's economic system? I couple with that the need to assess the possible impact of more and cheaper coal imports. Wales is still a steel nation and is still, just, a coal nation. I hope that the Minister of State, Welsh Office will answer those questions when he replies to the debate.

It is certain that a gap has opened between Britain and her competitors. As ever under this Government we are lagging behind. The Secretary of State did not address himself to that problem. The choice is between a low-wage, low-technology economy and a modern, high-wage, high-technology economy, particularly for Wales. The right hon. Gentleman was complacent about that.

Some of my hon. Friends responded with justifiable anger and perhaps even a hint of contempt when the Secretary of State spoke of skills. I think that I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) say, "We have been deskilled." It is an injurious fact that Britain and Wales have so suffered.

I have criticised the Secretary of State, so I shall give him my view. If Wales is to be successful in the competitive environment of the 1990s and beyond, it will be vital to ensure that the right conditions exist. Wales must be viewed as a good place for business.

The Secretary of State should know that in the run-up to the single European market of 1992 and beyond a trade and technology gap has opened between us and our competitors. We shall see a new wave of advanced industries and services in the 1990s. Wales must ensure that it is ready and waiting to grasp those opportunities. We can meet the challenge of a modern high-technology economy, and of fulfilling our potential as a modern industrial economy within Europe. I emphasise what the CBI recently said:

> "To maintain and improve Britain's position in an increasingly competitive world nothing short of a skills revolution is required."

But that has not taken place, and nothing that the Secretary of State said showed that the Government are determined to achieve that skills revolution. Indeed, only last month we heard of the sell-off of the four skillcentres in Wales, which suggests that the Government think quite differently about the challenge of the skills revolution.

I beg the Secretary of State—I demand, for the people of Wales—for more investment in education and skills and training. Without it, we shall not meet the challenge of this decade and we shall fall hopelessly far behind in the next century. At that time, our current schoolchildren will have to find their way, but we think that the Government are selling short their prospects by failing to address themselves to the skills revolution.

Having mentioned the industrial base—I did not take much to the Secretary of State's views on it—I shall now deal with social infrastructure. Not content with neglecting our industrial future, the Government have neglected social infrastructure. If we are to have a healthy industrial base, we must have healthy social services provision. The crucial factor in the education service is the number of teachers in it, their morale and their qualifications. There is disturbing evidence that far too many of our teachers want to leave the education service. Too many of the most skilled and experienced teachers are clamouring to leave the education service in Wales. We have talked of the challenge of Europe, but there are not enough teachers of French, German and Spanish, which will be the language of industrial advance in the next century. The Government are doing nothing to ensure that Wales has sufficient teachers of those languages.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that the vacancy rate among teachers in Wales is only 1 per cent.? Is he not aware that recruitment for initial teacher training is substantially above target in Wales?

Mr. Jones: I shall not take any lessons on teachers from the Minister of State. The trouble is that he is running the education service from behind a desk. He is not visiting schools, he is not taking advice from the profession and he has neglected to ensure that we have sufficient resources where it counts.

I am also concerned about housing. Our valleys communities are desperate for more investment in housing. I met the leaders of the valleys programme councils and it was clear from what they said that about £400 million must be invested in the valleys to modernise houses to a basic standard. Waiting lists for houses are growing and growing. Homelessness is rising and, most shaming of all at this stage of the Government's life, far too many people say that they cannot afford to buy and there are no houses for them to rent.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that not only is there serious homelessness in south Wales, but there is much evidence of homeless young people sleeping rough in the rural towns and villages of north and mid-Wales? Does he accept my estimate that there are at least 50 homeless young men with nowhere to sleep even in the apparently prosperous mid-Wales town of Newtown and that we cannot expect young people to take advantage of further education if they are out on the street with nowhere to live? That shows great neglect by the Government.

Mr. Jones: The hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned a very sad fact. The manner in which he made his point was very telling, and I agree with him.

[Mr. Jones]

The Health Service in Wales still has large waiting lists and the health authorities believe that, if they are to bring their buildings up to acceptable standards, expenditure in excess of £100 million may be required. Many of our schools are crumbling and again expenditure in excess of £100 million is required. There is a colossal need for investment in housing. The Government's record in education, housing and the Health Service is poor and they must redouble their efforts.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. I have already given way to him.

A healthy industrial base needs a healthy social structure, which Government policies are neglecting to provide. I want to give some brief advice to the ministerial team. Ministers should visit Brussels more often and fight their corner for agriculture. They must understand that there is unease in the upland communities; all is not well and Ministers must do more. They must redouble their efforts to improve housing. They must acknowledge that there is a crisis and that many families throughout Wales are getting hurt. They should champion the south Wales coalfield. I want the Secretary of State to secure the future of what is left of the south Wales pits. He should examine the impact on the coalfield of the proposed selling off of the electricity industry and of more coal imports.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is my hon. Friend aware that National Power and PowerGen are signing up deals every day to use gas instead of coal in future? If that continues, there will be no coal production going into power stations.

Mr. Jones: My right hon. Friend is correct. The Government's policy on the coal industry and electricity generation is a dagger. It is destructive and Wales will lose what remains unless the Secretary of State stirs his stumps and attempts to protect the pits that remain.

Mr. Peter Walker: In view of the intervention by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), would it be Labour party policy to discourage the use of gas in power stations?

Mr. Jones: It would be Labour party policy to sustain what remains of the coal industry.

Mr. Rowlands: As the Secretary of State has intervened on that issue, does my hon. Friend recall that when the right hon. Gentleman was in the Department of Energy he abandoned the import of gas from the Sleipner field in Norway, but we understand from today's newspapers that PowerGen and National Power intend to buy in such imports? Is the Secretary of State proud of that aspect of energy policy?

Mr. Jones: The Secretary of State is evading the impact of all those issues on the future of the south Wales coalfield. To his shame, he and his Department did not agree to meet the coalfield community campaign from Wales. He should urgently change his mind, open the door of the Welsh Office and let a well-informed and most reasonable representative group of people—the coalfield community campaign—put their powerful and moving case. He would learn a great deal about those communities.

There is no need for the Secretary of State to attempt to intervene in my remarks now as I am raising the issue of the poll tax. There are no irresponsible, profligate Welsh councils. If standard spending assessments were adhered to in Wales, our local education authorities would lose hundreds of teachers. They simply would not be able to employ them. The Secretary of State has given Welsh councils 3 to 4 per cent. too little for them to cope. He has neglected to give money to cover inflation and wage awards. He has neglected to cover the demands of legislation that the Government have steamrollered or are steamrollering through, such as the green Bill, the Education Reform Act and the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. The Government are now indulging in blame-gain politics. They are seeking an alibi by trying to shift the blame for the poll tax on to local authorities throughout Wales. However, the right hon. Gentleman knows that the problems relate to his Government's policies.

It is as well to state the objections to the poll tax. The poll tax is unjust. It is totally rejected by the Welsh people. It has no backing, no support and no friends. The poll tax attacks the family. It attacks the vulnerable; it is a tax and a policy that is totally at odds with the spirit of conducting government in Wales—which is fair play. It is against any concept of social justice. If I were to summarise the case in the most pointed way, I should put it like this:

> "We argue for the cohesion of the family, yet it will be far easier for young people to evade the tax if they leave home and seek more anonymous accommodation. We urge families to look after their elderly parents, but the elderly relative pays a poll tax at home but none in a local authority home. We will have created a granny tax. Many mothers stay at home to look after their children. The poll tax will send . . . them out to work . . . to pay the poll tax."

That might be regarded as a fair summation of the impact of the poll tax. But those are not my remarks; they are the remarks of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in a speech in December 1987. The speech also contained this little nugget:

> "I cannot remember a discussion of the option of the poll tax in which it was not rejected as expensive, ineffective and unfair."

It was clear from what the right hon. Gentleman, who used to be in the Cabinet, said that there had been a bit of a fight. Where was the Secretary of State for Wales? What did he do? Did he fight?

Mr. Peter Walker: The hon. Gentleman does not approve of the excellent arrangements that I have made for Wales. We are all waiting for the alternative from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jones: No. The Secretary of State has been in the Cabinet for 10 years. The right hon. Member for Henley has let the cat out of the bag. There was a discussion and a fight. Every time that discussion took place, it was decided that the poll tax was not up to scratch. Did the Secretary of State fight?

Mr. Walker *rose*—

Mr. Jones: The Secretary of State may answer when I allow him to come to the Dispatch Box. I want him to tell me and the people of Wales from the Dispatch Box why he

supported the poll tax when the right hon. Member for Henley was fighting and telling the truth about it. Why did he support the poll tax?

Mr. Walker: I have taken part in discussions. I agreed a poll tax arrangement for Wales in which the people of Wales will pay 40 per cent. less than people in England and Scotland. I repeat: what is the hon. Gentleman's alternative to the community charge? Will he guarantee that a Labour Government will keep that differential for Wales?

Mr. Jones: The right hon. Gentleman needs to give me the answers. Why did he resolve to support the poll tax in Cabinet? Why did he not fight against the poll tax? Why did he support the poll tax when the right hon. Member for Henley told the Cabinet that the poll tax should not be given to the people of Britain? Why did he agree to the poll tax in Cabinet? Why did he walk out of the Cabinet and go to Wales where he imposed the tax on our people? Why did he resolve to do that when the right hon. Member for Henley decided that the poll tax would not work? The Secretary of State will go down in the history of his office as the man who brought the poll tax to Wales and who could never come to the Dispatch Box to give the reasons why he supported it. Why did he support the poll tax in the Cabinet? His inability to give an answer is a sign of his unwillingness to give the House his reasons why he supported the poll tax. He is running away from the questions that we have put to him.

The right hon. Member for Henley also said:

"what will they"—

that is, the Government——

"use for arguments when facing the millions of people who will lose out heavily under authorities which are neither extreme nor extravagant?"

That is a fair question to put to the Secretary of State. Hundreds of thousands of people in Wales are now asking that question. The right hon. Member for Henley also said:

"Responsibility for the poll tax will now be targeted precisely and unavoidably at the Government who introduced that tax. That tax will be known as a Tory tax."—*[Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1139-41.]

The Secretary of State has brought that Tory tax to Wales. He will be remembered for that when the history of his actions is written.

Mr. Walker: The alternative?

Mr. Jones: The Secretary of State wants to know what our attitude will be.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): As my hon. Friend has been preparing his speech, he may not have had the opportunity to pose a question to the Secretary of State about the headline in the *Evening Standard*:

"Thatcher bids to stem the panic".

Perhaps my hon. Friend will ask the Secretary of State whether he shares the view expressed in the *Evening Standard*.

Mr. Jones: Conservatives only panic in a crisis. The Secretary of State has given us no answers this afternoon. However, he has had the brass neck to ask us what we shall do when his Government have had 10 years of office—*[Interruption.]* After about 12 Acts of Parliament designed to bring in their policies for local government finance, the Conservatives have eventually brought forward a poll tax. The Secretary of State and his party are in deep trouble. The Labour party will not make the mistake that the right hon. Gentleman made. Our proposals will be just, fair and efficient. They will be well thought out and better presented than the Government's poll tax. The Secretary of State must have a face of brass to avoid the questions that all of Britain is asking. He knows that his party has failed in the imposition of the poll tax and that it does not carry weight with the people of Britain.

I want the Secretary of State to understand that his policies for changing the National Health Service, for water privatisation and for the poll tax will guarantee the loss of his remaining parliamentary seats in Wales. There will be no escape for his colleagues in Wales and they will be doomed to disaster. When the general election takes place, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition will be elected as Prime Minister.

5.26 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I am especially fortunate in being called now to follow that shambolic demonstration from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). He has made some pretty bad speeches in the House, but that one takes the candle. He accused my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of an inability to answer the question, but he never answered ours. He accused my right hon. Friend of running away from the question, but he ran away from ours. My right hon. Friend asked him what was his alternative to the community charge, to which he replied that he would tell us his attitude. Even his hearing was not right. He would not say what his alternative was. There has been much discussion in the papers, but we do not know which alternative it is. That is all we are asking him to tell us. I am happy to give way to him, although in my six and a half years in the House the hon. Gentleman has never had the courtesy to give way to me. What is the alternative? Which variation is it? Is it the roof tax based on capital values or the roof tax based on capital value plus income tax?

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) is greatly respected by Conservative Members and by Opposition Members, which is why the Opposition are in a shambles and will not announce an alternative. The hon. Member for Perry Barr is an expert in such matters and he said that the roof tax, whether based on capital values or on capital values plus income tax, was a non-starter. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside accused us of introducing an anti-granny tax and of attacking the vulnerable. What would a tax based on capital values do? It would attack the vulnerable. Many of his and my constituents—I can think of several off the top of my head—are elderly people with no great income living in a house that they inherited from their parents. It may be a large house with a high capital value, but they have no cash flow. They are house-rich but cash-poor. What will the Labour alternative do to them? It will attack them. The Labour tax is the anti-granny tax.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr has told his party to drop the idea of a roof tax and I hope that it will take his advice. In its current shambles, the Labour party could not do better than to turn to him. The hon. Member for Perry Barr and I served together on the Standing Committee that considered the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and the hon. Gentleman made some sensible comments. The Labour party was in a real mess then over its alternative to the community charge. Now the hon. Member for Perry

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

Barr has said that he favours a tax based on floor area because no revaluation would be required and because he is worried about the bureaucratic cost of the tax.

The Labour party attacks us about the cost of collecting the community charge, yet Labour Members advocate a capital tax based on the capital value of houses, which would require an annual revaluation. God almighty, we should need a huge district valuer's office to undertake that task; that would remove most of the remaining unemployment. The hon. Member for Perry Barr says that a tax based on floor area would need no revaluation and "it would ensure that people in mansions paid more than those in a terraced house or flat."
That may be the case, but many elderly people live in large houses or flats with huge floor areas; they are house-rich or flat-rich but they are cash-poor. How will the hon. Gentleman's alternative help them?

Mr. Ray Powell: Watch your back.

Mr. Raffan: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ogmore, (Mr. Powell) for his compassion. I am overwhelmed. How extremely touching! Tears are coming to my eyes already that he should ask after my health. Labour Members must be in trouble if they do that.

The Labour party cannot attack the community charge unless they spell out what the alternative is. Labour Members escaped having to do that in Committee by saying, "We are not here to debate our alternative; we are here to debate your Bill." [HON. MEMBERS: "That's right."] I agree; fair enough. But the Opposition cannot go on like that for a whole Parliament. They must come up with some answers. We have asked them but they have not answered.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman who comes, like the cavalry, to the Labour party's rescue.

Mr. Wigley: I recall the Committee and all the problems that we faced. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the only fair local tax is a local income tax? And if he has reservations about the way in which the poll tax will hit his county of Clwyd, will he say how he hopes the county council will reduce its expenditure? What jobs would he do away with in Clwyd?

Mr. Raffan: I shall come to that in the second half of my speech. If the hon. Gentleman feels that I have not answered the question then, I shall gladly give way to him again. I assure him that quite a large section of my speech deals with Clwyd and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has anticipated my point.

I shall deal first with one or two other major issues. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) once described the annual Welsh day debate as the "annual general meeting" of Wales and Welsh Members, and to an extent that is true. It gives us a chance to report on the past year and to look to the future.

Tragically, my constituency has experienced three disasters during the past year—one natural and two man made.

Mr. Ray Powell: The poll tax.

Mr. Raffan: First, the House knows that as a result of the severe weather conditions and the gales of the past few days, there has been extensive flooding and damage throughout north Wales—especially in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) but also in mine. I agree with hon. Members who have said—I said it myself on Tuesday when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State replied to a private notice question—that we need a review of our sea defences. The sea wall at Ffynnongroew in my constituency, which is the responsibility of British Rail, was extensively breached. As I said in my intervention on Tuesday, we need a much more substantial wall to be built there, and British Rail must be provided with the extra capital that will be necessary because it will be a fairly major operation.

The overtopping of the coastal protection works at Prestatyn—many of them newly constructed—also raises considerable concern, and they must be urgently examined to ensure that they are effective. There is a need, too, for the outstanding works there, at a cost of £5·6 million staggered over a three-year period, to be completed as quickly as possible. Welsh Office help may be needed to accelerate the construction of those works.

My second point about the events of the past few days concerns the Nova complex in Prestatyn. In the words of the chief executive of the borough council, it has been "devastated". It was renovated beautifully two years ago at a cost of £2·5 million and the damage exceeds £1 million. It is the principal tourist attraction in a town which is dependent on tourism; it is the linch pin of the local economy and its loss will affect the incomes of many shops, cafes and pubs.

The reconstruction will take at least nine months and, for the sake of the town's economy, the centre needs to be reconstructed straight away. But the question arises whether it can be reconstucted straight away and on that site because the sea defences may not be adequate. There is no point in rebuilding it on that site if the same thing is going to happen again. There is an urgent need for Welsh Office help to ensure that we can make certain that that site is properly protected so that the reconstruction of the complex—so important to the local economy—can be carried out as soon as possible.

The second disaster to which I shall refer is the salmonella outbreak in my constituency last July. It was the worst outbreak ever seen in Europe. More than 400 local people became ill and the outbreak claimed at least two lives. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will recall, I telephoned him on 28 July last year to ask for a public inquiry. He told me that he wanted to conduct an internal review as he felt that that would be quicker, that it would enable us to learn lessons rather than apportion blame—there had already been rather too much mud-slinging in the press between the authorities involved. He rightly said—and it struck a chord with me—that we had to learn lessons quickly, that a formal investigation would take longer to set up and it would be inevitably a lengthy business.

That was at the end of July, but the review was not set in motion until Monday 6 November. That was the day when I asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary when the review would be completed. It had not yet even been started but my hon. Friend did not say in his answer to me on that day that an announcement was being made that day that it was to start. He said that it was in progress, or

words to that effect. I now ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, "Why the three-month delay?" The review should have been carried out promptly and effectively.

To be fair, on 5 February my right hon. Friend wrote to me to say that he had thought that it would not be right to begin a review of the handling of the outbreak until it was under control. But in fact it was under control by the end of July, when I spoke to him on the phone. Medically, it had been under control for several days by then. I had already met the Flint GPs who told me as much.

My right hon. Friend went on in his letter to say that the authorities involved needed time to consider what had taken place and draw conclusions from it. That is no excuse for not starting the review. In fact, the authorities involved were not asked for evidence until 17 November. If the review had been announced and started earlier, they would have delivered their evidence to the Welsh Office a great deal quicker. Delyn borough council is only considering its submission in full council today.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Ministers at the Welsh Office apparently

> "gave immediate, but careful, consideration to the form our investigation should take and how it should be conducted. Naturally, this took a little time."

But why three months? When I spoke to my right hon. Friend at the end of July he told me what format he felt the inquiry should take. I can understand a delay of two or three weeks, but not of two or three months.

I am not happy with the way in which the Welsh Office has handled the review. Ministers and officials have left themselves open to charges—however unfair—of complacency, dilatoriness and worse. They have also left themselves open, unfortunately, to continued renewed pressure in the media in north Wales for a public inquiry. We cannot have a public inquiry when we already have an internal review.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has assured me that the review will be completed with the minimum delay and has set his officials a target of one further month after Delyn borough council's submission has been received. But the report must be published in time for the lessons that have been learnt to be incorporated into the Food Safety Bill. For example, we require legislation to ensure that information regarding distribution outlets from food processing plants is easily available, which it was not in this case. A lot of time had to be spent gathering information. We need the report before the Bill starts its passage through this House so that we can incorporate the lessons learnt from the salmonella outbreak. We need to be able to handle such an outbreak better in future, because, however regrettable it may be, a further major food poisoning outbreak is almost inevitable. We need to know who should be in charge. Since the administration has changed and we no longer have chief medical officers of health, it was not clear in this case—and it will not be clear until we have the necessary guidelines issued by the Welsh Office and the Department of Health stating who should be in charge. In the Delyn salmonella outbreak, we ran into the problem of having no clear chain of command responsibility—a point that I made, forcefully I hope, in the House on Thursday 27 July.

I hope that we can have that important review as soon as possible. It is important not just for potential future outbreaks, but for the Food Safety Bill. It is essential that we incorporate the lessons learned from that outbreak in the Bill.

When I mentioned disasters a wit on the Labour Benches—there must be at least one—said, "What about the poll tax?"—or, as we can call it, the community charge. He anticipated me correctly. The second man-made disaster was imposed on my constituency in the form of the highest community charge in Wales by Labour-controlled Clwyd county council.

Mr. John P. Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: No, not yet. The hon. Gentleman must be patient. I shall give way to him later. I have just embarked on this subject. I shall gladly give way to him once I have made my principal point. Perhaps he will just listen for a moment.

The high county council community charge is the biggest man-made disaster imposed on my constituents by the Labour party. The leader of the Labour group on Clwyd county council—*[Interruption.]*—How interesting it is that Labour Members listen in silence about salmonella, but not when we criticise their party.

Mr. John P. Smith *rose*

Mr. Raffan: I shall happily give way in my own time after I have made my points.

Mr. John P. Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on the main point?

Mr. Raffan: No. The hon. Gentleman will not disturb my speech. I shall give way after I have finished this passage. The hon. Gentleman should be patient. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is always telling us to sit down and that he will give way when he is ready. Perhaps the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) will do that now. I know that he would like to disturb my speech and break up this section but I shall not allow him to do so. Labour Members are like Pavlov's dogs today. If one throws something out they jump up and bite. They are putting on quite a show; it must be for the cameras.

The leader of the Labour group on Clwyd county council, Councillor Elwyn Conway, has said that the highest community charge in Wales is all the fault of the Welsh Office. As Mandy would have said, "He would say that, wouldn't he?" He says that it is the low level and the reduction of central Government support. The facts contradict him and show that he has wilfully misled the people of Clwyd. The rate support grant for Clwyd increased by 9 per cent. which was more than inflation, in each of the past two years. This year it is up by £14·5 million, or 13 per cent., which is well above inflation. In addition to that, the Labour group on Clwyd county council has had an extra contribution through the business rate of £7·5 million. Central Government support has not been reduced, it has been increased well above inflation.

Mr. John P. Smith *rose*

Mr. Raffan: I have not forgotten the hon. Gentleman.

Councillor Conway says that people must not be misled into thinking that the high community charge is due to

> "extravagant spending . . . we went through the budget line by line and cut all unnecessary expenditure out."

No one knows whether that is true because the Labour group did it in caucus. I shall come to that again in a moment. Once more, the facts contradict what he says.

[Mr. Raffan]

Clwyd spending is to be increased by £28·9 million or 18 per cent. Only £14 million of that is accounted for by inflation. The remainder is new spending. Of course, Clwyd has not cut anything.

When the council was in financial crisis last July—a crisis that it should have anticipated because, as the largest group on the council, Labour was largely responsible for pushing through the previous budget—it said that it would

"programme a 10 per cent. cut in senior and middle management posts under the containment agreement with a potential saving of £15 million."

What has the council done? It has increased its staff by seven.

I and my hon. Friends know what Labour is up to. After all, we have the famous secret document from Southwark Labour group. It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to Southwark Labour group for letting us have that document. It shows precisely what Labour is up to. It asked Labour councillors to consider:

"What is more important—short-term protection of people by setting low poll taxes or longer term protection by getting rid of the poll tax?"

The document's advice was to set:

"The highest rate you can get away with."

That is what Labour in Clwyd has done. It is not being responsible, but simply playing politics, as it always has.

Mr. John P. Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the same strategy has been adopted by my district council, Vale of Glamorgan borough council, one of only two Conservative-controlled authorities in Wales, which has set a poll tax levy of £36 when the Welsh Office recommended a target of £19? That is almost a 100 per cent. increase.

Mr. Raffan: I wish that I had a £36 community charge in Delyn. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would send those councillors to me. Will he give them a free transfer? What is the charge in Delyn and Rhuddlan? I think that it is over £55 in Rhuddlan. In Delyn it is £45. Delyn borough council has done a good job because it is not Labour controlled. The Conservative group on Vale of Glamorgan council has done remarkably well. The hon. Gentleman will not be here very much longer; that is why I gave way to him. He will disappear down the chute at the next election. I am glad that he has brought us the good news that the community charge in his area is so low that he is likely to lose his seat when he next stands for it.

It would be remiss of me if I did not deal with the speech of the shadow Secretary of State for Wales. He is my favourite politician in the Labour party. He is the favourite politician of all Conservative Members. He is much more popular among Conservative Members than among Opposition Members. We all know why. It would be discourteous on St. David's day of all days to spell it out. I shall not be nasty to him.

In a message to Alyn and Deeside Labour party on 20 December last the hon. Gentleman wrote:

"Many Clwyd people face a bleak New Year, with a poorer quality of life than for many years."

Just a few days later another quotation appeared in the press:

"I'm confident that the Welsh economy, quite surprisingly, is going to outperform the UK economy as a whole for the first two or three years of the 1990s"

That strikes quite a different note. Whose quote was that? It was from the general secretary of the Welsh TUC, David Jenkins. He knows what is going on in Wales.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside told the Minister of State to visit some schools. I know that my hon. Friend does so frequently, not only in his constituency but in mine. It is time that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside got round a bit more. Perhaps he should talk to the TUC. The TUC will tell him what is going on in Wales. We are outperforming the United Kingdom economy. Nowhere is that more evident than in the constituency of Alyn and Deeside where my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is doing more than the hon. Gentleman ever did when he was a Minister. We never hear the good news from the hon. Gentleman. In Alyn and Deeside since 1988—*[Interruption.]* He is pointing at his watch now. He would prefer that this part of my speech was deleted. He will not have that luck.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am looking at my watch too.

Mr. Raffan: I shall be as brief as I can.

In Alyn and Deeside since 1988 unemployment has fallen by 47 per cent. thanks to Government policies. People there will benefit from the £300 million Toyota engine plant, thanks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The place is bristling with private sector business parks such as that at Broughton and St. David's Ewloe. That shows that private sector business is confident in the Government's policies in Alyn and Deeside, where one finds the headquarters of one of the great entrepreneurial successes of the past 10 years—Iceland Frozen Foods. There is also there the major industrial park in north Wales, booming to such an extent that it is fast running out of land for industrial development. The Welsh Development Agency is even looking to reclaim land from the Dee estuary.

When the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is not stirring up gloom and doom, he tells us that the sun will come out under Labour. He calls for more teachers, environmental health officers, schools, hospitals—more of everything. He never tells us—Labour never does—where the money will come from.

I know that the hon. Gentleman's favourite Conservative politician is my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd North-West. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen if I quote my hon. Friend. When he was asked during the leadership challenge why, despite his disagreement with many Government policies, he remained a staunch Conservative, my hon. Friend replied:

"However important it is to distribute wealth fairly, we have got to create wealth first and only the Conservative party is prepared to do that."

My hon. Friend was spot on as usual. The Labour party spends all its time telling us how it will spend money that it never creates.

I have a constituent called Carol Hughes. She describes herself as the press officer of Delyn constituency Labour party. Her letters to the press never fail to cheer me up. Her latest contribution is three columns long and is entitled,

"Our economy sweeps to the top of the agenda".

She wrote:

"People will be wondering what the Labour Party's answer is."

You can say that again, Carol. We are all wondering what the Labour party's answer is and I have a sneaking suspicion that Labour Members themselves are wondering, too.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Unless speeches are shorter, several hon. Members will be disappointed.

5.49 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I shall be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know that many of my hon. Friends want to speak. However, I should like to touch on several subjects, some of which directly affect my constituency, but which also have larger implications for the whole of Wales.

We in Ebbw Vale hope and are extremely determined to make the garden festival a great success, not only for Ebbw Vale and Blaenau Gwent, but for the whole of Wales. I was glad to hear the terms in which the Secretary of State spoke about that today. I hope that he will soon take action to ensure that the prospects for the festival are not in any way injured by the proposals for the great opencast operation. That we oppose on general grounds. Although I am not saying anything against opencast generally – many such operations are carried out perfectly properly – the idea of having a great opencast operation at the entrance to the garden festival at this time is quite wrong. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman understands that we oppose that proposition.

I am happy to welcome what the right hon. Gentleman said about the Welsh Development Agency and its achievements. Some of us can remember the battles in the House to establish it. The whole principle was opposed by the Conservative party. We are therefore glad to see it go from strength to strength. I am especially glad about the fresh allocations for the two different parts of its operations. It was always wrong that the Welsh Development Agency should have to make difficult choices between new factories and new land developments, when we needed many more resources for both. We shall need such resources on an even greater scale in the 1990s. I am sure that a new Government formed by the Labour party would carry forward the work that it initiated in relation to the Welsh Development Agency, but for as long as the Government are in office, I urge them to act on an even bigger scale.

The fact that nobody can describe a new project with such embellishments as the Secretary of State means that we must immediately examine its consequences. At the very moment that the right hon. Gentleman is giving the most flowery account of its prospects, if one looks at the details, one discovers that the local authorities will be left to face some of the difficult consequences of the actions that the right hon. Gentleman has taken. My own local authority would be astonished to hear some of the things that the right hon. Gentleman has said today about our housing programme. In the next year we have to face a cut of almost £4 million in our capital programme for housing. That means a big setback for our whole housing programme. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will look at the details that we are presenting to him and try to restore some of the steady expansion for which we have been fighting in recent years.

The Secretary of State tries to present the picture of a steady and certain expansion in the Welsh economy, but that is not the picture that he presents in the rest of the country. I have invited him previously to make in Wales the speech that he sometimes makes in England. When he speaks in England, he is an old Keynesian expansionist, which is a good thing to be, because I am a Keynesian expansionist also. However, when the right hon. Gentleman comes to Wales, he gives us all that monetarist nonsense which sticks so much in the throat – and so rightly – of his hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who almost won the leadership of his party. What a great advantage it would have been to all of us if that had happened. We might have got on with some of these policies more quickly.

The Secretary of State knows the truth of what I am saying. He knows perfectly well that, if the speeches that he has made about the economy generally were applied to Wales, they would show that we have wasted huge resources and that hundreds of millions of pounds have been poured down the drain of mass unemployment – and nowhere more overwhelmingly or in such a flood as in Wales. The rest of the United Kingdom has not been hit as badly as we have in that respect.

The right hon. Gentleman is now trying to tell us that that is all over and that we have passed through that period. He quotes the figures that he gave in the House the other day. I am sure that that question must have been planted. The Secretary of State would not dare to answer such a question from his hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman would not ask his right hon. Friend such an innocent question.

The question related to the employment figures in Wales now as compared with 1979. The right hon. Gentleman replied that the figure today is 1,158,000 people, compared with 1,160,000 in 1979. In other words, the right hon. Gentleman was saying that they have just about caught up with the 1979 figure – although not quite, because they are 2,000 people short, and represents that as a great triumph. As he well knows – this is why the right hon. Gentleman asked the question to be framed in those terms – the unemployment figures for Wales now are still far greater than they were in 1979. There is still a huge waste because of mass unemployment in Wales.

Of course we are glad that the employment figures for Wales have just got back to their 1979 level, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said several times, those figures also represent a different kind of employment. The right hon. Gentleman should not get so angry about the fact that we mention this, because there is now a different kind of employment which, in the main, does not give such well-paid jobs over such a wide area. I am not saying that many well-paid jobs have not come into Wales, but they are on nothing like the scale of the well-paid jobs that we have lost. The right hon. Gentleman tries to question that figure, but he knows perfectly well that I am telling the truth.

Many of the jobs are also part-time. Again of course we do not object to part-time jobs, but it is grossly misleading to include the figures for part-time jobs in the total figure for employment in our country. Indeed, no one knows how grossly misleading those figures are more than the Secretary of State because, as I have said, when speaking on the other side of the border a few years ago, the right hon. Gentleman would have applied himself exactly to the same problems to which I am now referring.

[Mr. Michael Foot]

Nobody knows exactly what will happen in Wales in the next two or three years. Does anybody think—the right hon. Gentleman has no right to claim this—that Wales will not be touched by the general economic problems that we face in Britain, the problems that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is having to face because of the collapse of the Government's general economic policy and, for example, the high interest rates, and all the other fearful weapons against which the right hon. Gentleman has protested for so long? If anything, those problems are even more injurious to Wales than to England——

Mr. Peter Walker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Foot: The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but we in Wales do not have immunity from the consequences of the Government's hideous and mounting economic problems. The right hon. Gentleman and the Government should accept some of the advice given in their recent electoral leadership contest and adopt an altogether new policy. That is what the Opposition are determined to achieve, in this area as in so many others.

I notice the time and will conclude with this. The Secretary of State was so proud of his achievements in relation to the poll tax that he would not have mentioned them this afternoon but for the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman—that is much the wisest and the best way to proceed. It shows that the right hon. Gentleman is as proud of the poll tax as he is of the other stupid measures that have been adopted by the Government. It is much better for him to keep quiet altogether. I advise him to continue on that course.

Above all, the right hon. Gentleman should try to determine how—for as long as he remains on the Treasury Bench—he can apply in Wales the expansionist policies that he says are necessary for the United Kingdom as a whole, because Wales needs those expansionist policies more than any other part of the kingdom.

5.59 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): St. David's day is a special day. In the days of our youth, we Welshmen and women used to celebrate it with leeks and daffodils. We were proud to wear them, as we are today. I am proud to be a Welshman, and proud of the Welsh nation and the Welsh people. I want them to get a fair deal, but I am not convinced that they are doing so.

We are undoubtedly an inquisitive, industrious, enthusiastic and, sometimes, a humorous people. There is still a welcome in the hillsides, and I hope that there will continue to be one. At present, we are in danger of finding no Welsh people in the hillsides to provide that welcome, and that is a depressing prospect.

There is no doubt that in the past week people have suffered, particularly in north Wales. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) in the Chamber. I do not agree with much of what he said, but he has certainly come from his sick bed fighting this afternoon. I agree with what he said about the needs of the north Wales coast. The people there deserve our great sympathy, and adequate resources to put right the problems in that area. The problem of drying out houses is particularly serious. Will Welsh Office Ministers take note that I believe, from information that I have, that there are inadequate drying facilities in that area, particularly for old people, to dry their houses after the waters have receded? That important problem needs to be overcome.

The cry across Europe in the past six months has been for freedom and democracy, as European nations gain their liberty and experience practical democracy for the first time in 50 years. This spring, from Czechoslovakia to East Germany, Romania and other places, the citizens will experience blessed relief at being able to practise democracy in those countries. How lucky they are to have won the prize of liberty and democracy. If they have any sense, they will not follow the British model of democracy but will, I trust, follow the best model produced by British constitutional lawyers—the West German model which is designed on federalism and proportional representation.

It was not an accident that the Secretary of State mentioned the Premier of Baden-Wurttemberg, a beneficiary of that system of federalism. He has more powers than the Secretary of State for Wales; I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman wishes that he had the powers of the Prime Minister of Baden-Wurttemberg. It was significant that the Secretary of State said that he was pleased to be able to negotiate with a man who clearly had much more economic power than he has.

I ask a fundamental question: when will Wales get freedom and democracy, and how much of each will it get? Is there freedom to be housed in Wales? I think not, when there are 70,000 people on the housing list and a maximum of 4,000 homes per annum being built at present. That means misery and makes it impossible for many young people to be housed.

In the 1970s, 8,000 council houses per annum were being built. Last year, 750 council houses were built and Tai Cymru says that 3,000 will be built in the next 12 months. That is a serious deficit, and, in human terms, an appalling prospect. The housing planning rules need to be changed and affordable housing needs to be brought in.

Will there be freedom from the poll tax? I think not: the tax will engulf everyone, and ability to pay will not be one of its leading principles. How is it that it will cost two and a half times the figure for administering the rates to administer the poll tax? It costs more than £9·5 million for the rates, yet nearly £26 million to administer the poll tax. Will that mean increasing public expenditure or wasting taxpayers' money? I think it will be a profligate waste of taxpayers' money.

Is there freedom to work and earn a decent wage in Wales? I think not, when there are still 85,000 to 90,000 people unemployed in Wales. We may be glad that the figures have been reduced, but a further big drop must be brought about. We have the lowest wages in mainland Britain. I thought that it was particularly ironic to see a headline in one of the London evening papers last night proclaiming, "Sue BR". I thought that said everything about the cultural divide between south-east England and Wales. First, practically no one in Wales has the money to sue BR; secondly, in most parts of Wales there are no trains. When I was standing on Woking station recently, I found out that there were 156 trains a day going through the station. That is the culture difference that we are talking about.

We want freedom for the Welsh language to be spoken, when only 20 per cent. of the people speak the language. What will happen about a new Welsh language Bill? At present, the Welsh language has insufficient status, and

that certainly needs to be put right. I hope that, when the Minister sums up, he will say something about a new Welsh language Bill.

Will there be the freedom for young people to live, work and play in their home areas in Wales? That certainly does not seem a reasonable prospect while there is low pay and little housing, and that is a serious problem.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does my hon. Friend share my experience? In my constituency, unemployment is decreasing, which is encouraging, and poverty is increasing, which is discouraging. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government cannot claim to have solved the social problems of Wales when, in areas such as mine, despite the fact that there are apparently more jobs, in real terms people are getting poorer and poorer? That is particularly true of young people, embarking on a life together and starting the families that will be the future of Wales, if Wales is to have any future at all.

Mr. Livsey: I could not agree more with my hon. and learned Friend. The position is serious; there are many people on £70 or £80 a week who see no prospect of obtaining a mortgage, given the unaffordability of housing.

Freedom of access to the National Health Service is endangered by the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. It will result in hospital trusts, and in rural GPs being cash-limited. Many of them say that they will not be able to get around the rural areas anyway.

Will there be adequate freedom for people to be educated at every level? There seems no opportunity to learn foreign languages in Wales, other than French. Our schools do not have the facilities, yet 1992 is coming.

Will there be freedom to travel around Wales? The road system is appalling, and we need a good north-south Wales road. Public transport in Wales is an absolute desert; in many places, pensioners are stuck and unable to move around as they can in many other parts of the country.

Sport is a problem for young people. There is a village in my constituency where, because of restrictions, only five houses have been built in the past 20 years. A little longer ago than that, I used to play football and cricket against the village teams. Now there are not enough young people in the village to get up a cricket or football team—that is serious.

What about democracy itself—that other cry from Europe? We live in a dependency culture. We have never had a time such as this past 10 years. There has never been a Conservative majority in Wales this century, yet we are ruled centrally by a Government with only seven Members representing Welsh constituencies. Indeed, Britain as a whole gave 44 per cent. support to the Conservative party at the last general election, and somehow, by magical arithmetic, the Government ended up with a majority of 101. That is supposed to be democracy. Britain is the only state in the European Community that does not have proportional representation.

We need reforms of many kinds. We suffer from government by diktat. To assist Wales, we should, among other things, have constitutional reform to bring freedom and democracy, with the introduction of PR United Kingdomwide, and create a Welsh senate elected by PR. We must introduce a Bill of Rights to protect the people, including the adoption of the European convention on human rights, for our minorities, be they Welsh-speaking or English-speaking. We want an elected second Chamber in the Palace of Westminster. We want a Freedom of Information Act, and more power given to Members of the European Parliament. We want a proper relationship between Wales and Europe.

Today, in Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed, central Government are threatening to poach away £7·2 million, swindling us out of that money. Even Ministers in the Welsh Office and civil servants in that Department and in the European Community agree about that. But someone in central Government has his sticky fingers on the money, and that is not good enough. We want a Welsh Assembly with real powers to legislate and with economic powers. We want local government reformed into multi-purpose authorities having authority in local communities, with more power given to community councils. We must release the energies of the people of Wales so that we can help ourselves and have more confidence in ourselves.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that he would also like the local assembly of which he is speaking to have powers of taxation?

Mr. Livsey: I did not mention taxation, although it is known that my party supports local income tax as a method of financing local government. I said that it should have more economic powers of the kind that the Minister already enjoys in relation to the Welsh Development Agency and similar bodies. Such powers are enjoyed by regions of the Federal Republic of West Germany.

The Secretary of State said that WDA funding had been doubled recently. That is not the experience of development in mid-Wales. The Development Board for Rural Wales needs more funding, particularly to tackle some of the social problems that have been mentioned in the debate. More power should be made available to enable us to ensure that our youngsters can live in the areas in which they were brought up. They must be able to work and earn a decent wage in those areas.

6.13 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): We had from the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) an odd mixture of inspissated gloom and unsubstantiated theorising.

I shall stick closely to the situation in my constituency, and the House will understand why my thoughts are concentrated on that area. But before speaking of the catastrophe that has struck the north Wales coast and my constituency in particular, there are two matters of great importance to which I must refer.

The first is the facilities for cancer treatment in north Clwyd. At present, cancer patients there and in Gwynedd must travel all the way to Clatterbridge, in the Wirral peninsula, for treatment—a long and trying journey for them and their relatives and visitors. Up to now, the excellence of the facilities and the devotion of the staff at Clatterbridge went some way to offset those disadvantages. But the equipment and accommodation there are beginning to show their age and the balance of the argument has now shifted.

There is now a strong case for providing the full range of cancer treatment facilities at Glan Clwyd hospital, Bodelwyddan. There is no doubting the strong feeling in

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

the area in favour of that. The admirable Mrs. Smith of Old Colwyn has collected 15,000 signatures on a petition which the Under-Secretary received from me recently.

I am aware that there is no such corresponding demand for the provision of local facilities in south Clwyd, where they enjoy the admirable facilities of Christie hospital, Manchester. I should be sorry if recent statements by consultants in the Wrexham area, stressing the value of Christie hospital to their patients, in any way weakened the case for providing more local facilities for north Clwyd, where the balance of argument is different.

One of the finest schools in my constituency is Emrys ap Iwan at Abergele. Under tertiary reorganisation proposals, that school is liable to lose its sixth form. I have mixed feelings about that, but I do not support the demand now being made by some parents and governors at that school to opt out of local authority control.

Those matters are of long-term concern. Naturally, my mind and heart are full of the tragedy that struck my constituents living along the north Wales coast. I returned only an hour or so ago from a quick dash by train this morning to see the situation for myself, and I have returned briefly to take part in the debate. I apologise to hon. Members in all parts of the House for the fact that I shall be returning to my constituency by car tonight and will not remain to hear the rest of the debate.

It has been a comfort to my constituents, nearly 2,000 of whom have had their homes flooded, their possessions ruined, sometimes their pets drowned and who face many more days in makeshift accommodation, that the Secretary of State reacted swiftly to their plight by pledging Government support and by yesterday sending the Minister of State to see the situation for himself. I was sorry to learn that he had an uncomfortable flight.

Even more comforting has been the presence today of the Prince and Princess of Wales, who returned specially from Switzerland for that purpose. I was able to see for myself this morning how much their visit was appreciated.

There is universal praise for the actions of the rescue services—the fire, police and ambulance men and women—and for the efficient and caring way in which the local authorities have tackled the work of rescuing people. One old lady today could be rescued from her attic only by rescuers breaking open the roof. She had taken refuge in the attic, which was the only part of her home above water.

People are also grateful for the energy and determination that is being shown in the attempt to reconstruct the shattered sea wall. In view of allegations that may have been made, I should put on record the fact that the length of sea wall that collapsed was a long way from the place where a minor breach occurred a week or so ago. The mayor of Colwyn has launched a disaster appeal, which I am sure will be generously supported by those who have been spared misfortune.

The scale of the disaster is immense. Nearly 2,000 people have had to leave their homes and it will be many days before they can return, always assuming that the worst of the flooding is over, and even that is not certain. When they go back, they will find their carpets and decorations ruined beyond repair. Virtually all the furniture in their downstairs rooms—for bungalow dwellers, that means every room in the house, and it is an area of bungalows—has been damaged or at best disfigured, including all their kitchen equipment, which is probably now unsafe.

Raw sewage is washing back up the drains. The drains must first be cleared and then all traces of the sewage removed. I hope that in many cases the insurance companies will pick up the huge bills, but that will mean even higher premiums having to be paid next year.

The farmers have suffered substantial losses. I do not yet have a reliable estimate of the number of sheep drowned, but it is certainly in excess of 150. Many uplands sheep are wintered on the salty meadows behind Towyn. Valuable fences have been swept away and land drains hopelessly silted up, and most of the fertiliser in the land has been washed out. There has, thank God, been no loss of life even though, understandably but pathetically, a number of people refused to leave their homes as the waters swirled around them. That apart, the scale of the disaster can reasonably be compared with an earthquake.

It may well be found that many of the houses have suffered structural damage, as did that of the leader of Prestatyn council. These houses will need to be completely rebuilt. The financial responsibility for the repair of the sea wall falls fair and square on British Rail. That, however, raises the question whether British Rail's capital allocation will be sufficient to meet that responsibility, although it is Colwyn's borough technical services department which is doing the work and making heroic efforts against the tide to get it completed.

Much of the financial responsibility for repairing damage to houses will lie with the insurance companies. They are showing an admirable promptness about settling claims and making advance payments, but a heavy financial responsibility will none the less fall on Colwyn borough council. It is too soon to arrive at proper estimates, but I have heard a figure of £5 million and I should be surprised if it were much less.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend say, without waiting to be asked, that the Bellwin rules will apply, but I am becoming convinced that it will be necessary to go a good deal further than that. No one in Colwyn will object to paying the equivalent of a 1p rate—about £22,000—but if the Government will reimburse only 75 per cent. of the excess above £22,000, Colwyn could be faced with finding £1 million more, which I would regard as wholly unacceptable.

Moreover, this is a singularly unhappy time at which to impose a huge additional burden on local authorities that are necessarily involved in the present rather unseemly wrangle over local government spending. If the extra money that Colwyn has to find takes its expenditure far above the standard spending assessment, will it be charge-capped? Presumably not, but it would be nice to be reassured. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take the first possible opportunity to be both more generous and more explicit than he was able to be when replying to me on Tuesday.

I have spoken longer than I wanted to and than I usually do, but I must say a few words before I end about the more general and long-term aspects of——

Mr. Ray Powell: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I have just received a letter from the office of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, stating that a person in my constituency who owns and runs a post office in Maesteg road, Tondu, has gathered

together blankets to send to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but the Post Office has said that it refuses to accept the blankets unless the charges are paid. The hon. Gentleman will recall that when we were collecting for the Ethiopia appeal the Post Office agreed to a freepost system. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and others will take up this matter so that freepost will be extended to all who want to send help of this nature to the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and glad that he has raised this matter. I hope that the Post Office will take due note of the strong point that he has made. I shall certainly seek opportunities of bringing it to the Post Office's attention. The mayor of Colwyn has launched an appeal: there are notices everywhere asking for blankets and warm clothes, which are desperately needed. One of the hotels into which people were put was not centrally heated, but that was not discovered until too late, so there is a great need for warm clothing and blankets.

I want to end with one general point. Whether it is the greenhouse effect or sunspots, there is no doubt that the level of water around our shores is rising. It will therefore be necessary to re-examine all Britain's sea defences. That will reinforce the need for the public, political parties and the Government to be prepared to invest a far higher share of the national wealth in capital equipment for transport, coastal protection and so on. We cannot buy these things with the money in our pockets, whether in cash or in the form of those nice little plastic cards. Government action alone can provide them.

As I drove this morning through the sodden, crumbling bungalows along the road to Towyn and saw the pathetic blankets hanging out to be dried and the forlorn people standing around, I noticed that quite often a shiny expensive-looking car was parked outside one of the sodden bungalows. That caused me to reflect for a moment or two on a possibly new twist to the concept of private affluence and public squalor.

6.26 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I have great admiration for the way in which the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) presented the case on behalf of his constituents and for the empathy that he showed for them in the disaster that they are facing. He eloquently put the case for the need for improved cancer services in north Wales, in the light of the long distances that many constituents have to travel to obtain the services at Clatterbridge.

I also agreed with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about coastal defences. Last week, at a conference of the Royal Society, it was said that all five predicted models of climatic change, including that of the Meteorological Office in London, showed that over the next 50 years rainfall levels in the United Kingdom between the months of November and May will rise by 30 per cent. It would be extremely good if the Government took note of that sort of prediction and made the necessary preparations.

I am disturbed that the Welsh Office has taken so long to respond to the Select Committee report published on 21 June last year and entitled "The Channel Tunnel: Implications for Wales". I am pleased that a Command Paper is promised for later this month, but the Welsh Office should not take so long to respond to such an important report.

After more than 10 years of Conservative rule, as the Minister will know very well from past Welsh questions and other occasions, the missing link in the M4 remains. That is a disgrace. Although I am pleased that the Costain tender has been let at last, it is vital that the tenders be let for the second and third sections as soon as possible. I know that the Minister has said that that will take place early in the period April 1991 to March 1994, but I stress that it must be early in that period.

It disturbs me enormously, and it is another disgrace on the part of the Welsh Office, that circular No. 30, issued in 1986 and entitled "Housing for Senior Management", still exists. In it, the Welsh Office—not the Department of the Environment—discriminated in favour of senior managers by giving special planning preference to a certain group. The Welsh villages, where people wish to remain, are prevented from expanding by strict planning rules. It would be a tremendous feather in the cap of the Secretary of State if he withdrew the circular so that Welsh people were treated in the same way as the English.

It is a disgrace that there is not a Welsh Office Minister in Committee on the Environmental Protection Bill, especially as waste disposal is different in Wales. Under clause 39(6) Welsh district councils are precluded from providing plant and equipment for recycling purposes. That is disgraceful. I am not proud of the fact that there is not a Welsh Office Minister in Committee to put the Welsh case. The Welsh Office team should not be proud of that either.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that membership of such Committees is a matter for the Committee of Selection?

Mr. Wardell: I am sure that the Minister did everything in his power to get on to the Committee. At the most recent meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee I referred to the problem of contaminated land in certain sites in north Wales.

Mr. Ray Powell: On the point about membership of Committees, it should be said that the Government select their hon. Members to serve on Committees, whatever the Bill is. Likewise, we decide which hon. Members from the Opposition should be on Committees. If talks had taken place between the usual channels, no doubt there would have been a Minister from the Welsh Office on that Committee.

Mr. Wardell: I thank my hon. Friend, who is a member of the Committee of Selection, for explaining the position.

I refer to an environmental matter of great concern. In a report in the 1985-86 Session the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs dealt with pollution off Welsh bathing beaches. As the statistics relating to the detailed sampling programme of United Kingdom bathing waters, carried out between 15 May and 30 September last year, have just become available, it is timely to examine briefly the compliance of Welsh bathing beaches with the 1976 EEC bathing water directive. In doing so, it is worth bearing in mind the disgraceful behaviour of the Department of the Environment in deliberately avoiding the implementation of the directive by defining a bathing beach in such a way that not a single bathing beach existed in Wales.

[Mr. Wardell]

I suggest that a new trophy be awarded in Wales, perhaps called the Edwards/Walker trophy, for the beach which tops the filthiest beach league for total coliforms and Escherichia coli. In the summer of 1989 it was a close call between two beaches—Llandudno west shore and Rhyl—for the trophy. For total coliforms Llandudno west shore pipped Rhyl, with five of its 21 samples failing to conform. Rhyl, however, had the consolation of knowing that it scored the highest for any individual sample, at over 40,000 coliforms per 100 ml of water—four times the EEC conforming level of 10,000. There is strong evidence—although I have not looked for it—that Llandudno west shore is peeved that Rhyl managed to force its way to the top position in the E. coli table, failing with six out of 21 samples, one sample more than Llandudno west shore could manage.

None the less, Llandudno west shore gave a sound beating to Rhyl for the filthiest individual E. coli sample, standing at 21,300 E. coli per 100 ml of water, Rhyl's filthiest sample being a mere 7,600. Llandudno west shore must guard against becoming over-complacent, for Rhyl's performance was considerably better than the standard of 2,000 E. coli laid down by the EEC. Perhaps the trophy could be awarded to one for six months and then passed to the other for the remaining six months.

In a class of their own, but none the less worth mentioning as beaches where urgent clean-up operations are needed for E. coli, are Trecco bay, Porthcawl, Jackson's bay and Whitmore bay, Barry, and Langland bay and Limeslade bay in my constituency, as well as Kinmel bay for total coliforms. It is only fair to point out that there has been a major upset for Rhyl, compared to the 1988 bathing season. Then Rhyl beat Llandudno west shore on both total coliforms and E. coli. Since then Llandudno west shore has taken a surprise lead in the total coliforms section, and punters are expecting a major reversal this summer if Rhyl is demoted to second place for E. coli as well. Only time and tide—spelt with a small 't'—will tell.

Of course, we have to put that in context, as it would be grossly unfair to turn a blind eye to a beach in England that easily makes the Ridley/Patten trophy a far more coveted prize. The outright winner—I am sure all hon. Members are waiting to hear—is Seaton Carew centre in the Northumbria region. Even Llandudno west shore and Rhyl pale into insignificance compared with that beach. There is little doubt that it is going for the record as the filthiest beach within the EEC, if not the entire world. Sixteen out of its 23 samples for total coliforms failed, with the filthiest being 2,700,000 coliforms per 100 ml of water. It did even better on the E. coli count where it registered the staggering figure of 4,100,000 E. coli per 100 ml of water, with 17 of its 23 samples failing the test.

The time has come for the Government to issue better advice to swimmers than, "Keep your mouth shut". I want to be able to tell my constituents that Langland bay and Limeslade bay are safe beaches off which to bathe. I cannot do that today. The Secretary of State and other Ministers in the Welsh Office should read again page 87 of the 10th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution:

"the Department of Health and Social Security does not rule out the possibility that sewage contamination of bathing waters and beaches could be associated with an increased risk of travellers' diarrhoea and similar complaints. We believe that this is a prudent attitude to take in the light of current knowledge and that it is now necessary to modify the reliance hitherto placed on a report published almost a quarter of a century ago which in any case concentrated on a few serious diseases. We note, too, that besides infecting the digestive system some faecal organisms may cause infections of the eyes (conjunctivitis) or of cuts and abrasions: children, because of their playing habits, may be particularly liable to contact with infectious material."

There have been changes in the water industry, and the Government have set up a detailed inquiry into the survival of viruses in sea water, but it is vital that people bathing off British beaches, especially Welsh ones, be as safe as possible. We should be as close as possible to 100 per cent. certain that there are no health risks.

6.40 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am sure that nobody would disagree with anything that the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) has just said about the need to improve our bathing beaches. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not speak on that subject. The annual Welsh day debate is an opportunity for Members to speak about both constituency and Wales-wide issues. I want to do that, as I have done in previous years.

I want to begin by looking at the economy and at agriculture in my constituency. We are aware of the problems that continue to dog agriculture as a result of the over-valuation of the green pound. This matter has not been mentioned in the debate so far, although it is very important. I am sure that, on both sides of the House, there is considerable support for helping our farmers by reducing the value of the green pound and abolishing it by 1992. That is necessary if we are to have a level playing field on which to compete with our European partners in agriculture.

I welcome the recent decision by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to raise bovine spongiform encephalopathy compensation to 100 per cent. and to distribute an extra 1 per cent. in milk quotas. Those are welcome decisions. They will help the farmers in my constituency who are suffering as a result of increased interest rates and the fact that the green pound gap is so wide at present.

We must look also at the record of the Welsh economy between 1979 and 1989 and during the period of the last Labour Government. My own constituency has seen unemployment fall by 50 per cent. since January 1987. I welcome the improvement that has taken place in the local economy. The enterprise zone in Pembroke dock has led to a boom in industrial and manufacturing jobs in that area. In addition, there has been a resurgence of morale and spirit in Milford Haven as a result of the Milford Haven enterprise initiative, which was brought forward by the Welsh Office in the autumn of last year. That is particularly welcome, as Milford Haven is this year celebrating the bicentenary of its town charter.

It was depressing to listen to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) recite a list of statistics about the Welsh economy as he saw it. We heard nothing at all about the complete change that has taken place in the structure of the Welsh economy since 1979. We heard nothing about the fact that the Welsh economy is not now dependent on two or three heavy industries, that it has diversified so that we can get away from the old structural unemployment that bedevilled Wales since the beginning of the century.

The hon. Gentleman talked about coal mining. Let me remind him that his party, when in government, closed more coal mines in the United Kingdom than has any other Government. It is astonishing, therefore, that he should talk about mining. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) spoke about the steel industry and unemployment. It should be remembered that, during the period 1974-79, when he was a senior Cabinet Minister, the steel industry was inefficient and unprofitable. It was losing about £2 million a day. Today, the steel industry is making a profit of £400 million a year—due in part to the excellent record of the industry in south Wales.

When considering the economy of Wales, we ought to look to the future, not to the past. If we are to have better mobility, it is particularly important that the road and railway systems in Wales be improved. I want to say a word or two about the transport system in my constituency. There is a long way to go before we will have improved the structure of the road system in Pembrokeshire to the standard of that along the north Wales coast. In the past, I have pressed my hon. Friend the Minister of State about improvements to the A477. I also want to see improvements to the A478, because that road causes particular problems to constituents in the south of the county, who, as the economy improves, have to put up with heavy vehicles trundling along roads that were not built for such vehicles.

It is also important that the railway network in Pembrokeshire be improved. Let me describe something that depresses me. One can get to Swansea in two and a half hours by InterCity 125. Apart from the train that leaves Paddington at 5.17 every evening, in the case of every train going to Pembrokeshire one gets to Swansea and then has to transfer to a two or three-car 30-year-old diesel multiple unit. Having waited 20 or 25 minutes, one spends nearly two hours trundling round the countryside before getting to Milford Haven.

Those trains are out of date and dirty. They are cold in winter and hot in summer, and they are overcrowded. Time and time again, British Rail has failed to keep its promise to introduce a completely new set of Sprinter trains on those lines. I say on behalf of my constituents that we shall be considering very carefully any way of pursuing British Rail if it does not provide its customers with the service they want. British Rail has a duty to my constituents to help to improve the local economy by upgrading the railway service that it provides in Pembrokeshire.

There is one more aspect of transport to which I want to refer, but I shall do so very briefly as I hope to secure an Adjournment debate on it in the near future. I refer to the toll on the Cleddau bridge in Pembrokeshire. For the last 20 years, there has been agreement among all parties that it is unfair and unreasonable that this little bit of the road network joining north Pembrokeshire and south Pembrokeshire should be subject to a toll. The time has come to stop trying to screw down people who happen to have to cross an estuary, demanding of them a toll that does not have to be paid on the rest of the national network. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will listen carefully to the representations that will be made to him in the near future about this subject.

I want to turn now to the Health Service in Wales. With the hon. Members for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, I have just spent an enjoyable three months on the Standing Committee that considered the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. During those debates, I was interested in the sheer hypocrisy displayed by the Labour party when it comes to the Health Service.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who was an Under-Secretary of State for Wales between 1974 and 1979, had the cheek to attack this Government on the Health Service. His hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), on 20 December, put a series of questions to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary about Health Service spending in Wales. The answers that my hon. Friend was able to give were very revealing. For example, total National Health Service gross expenditure in Wales, in the five years of Labour government, improved by £76 million; in the following 10 years—exactly double the period—it did not just double but went up by £364 million in real terms.

In the case of hospital and community health services, expenditure rose by £49 million in the five years during which the hon. Gentleman was a Minister at the Welsh Office; it has gone up by £221 million in real terms in the 10 years of this Government. Expenditure in real terms actually fell by £15 million under the stewardship of the hon. Gentleman who is now wisely covering his head as he hears these statistics; it has increased by £18 million in real terms under this Government. Expenditure on family practitioner services increased by £32 million in real terms in the last five years of the last Labour Government, but has increased by £101 million in the 10 years of this Government.

Wherever one looks at expenditure on the Health Service in Wales, one sees that the record of this Government is superior by far to anything that the hon. Gentleman, who was Under-Secretary between 1974 and 1979, could boast about. It is no wonder he glossed very quickly over the whole issue of the Health Service. Other things that he did not tell the public of Wales are that spending on the Health Service there, as part of gross domestic product, is 7·1 per cent., compared with 5·4 per cent. for the United Kingdom as a whole; that we have 18 per cent. more medical and dental staff than we had in 1979, and 13 per cent. more nursing and midwifery staff; that we are treating 110,000 more in-patients and 100,000 more out-patients; and that there are over 58,000 more day cases than there were in 1979.

Wherever we look, we see the progress that the Government have made in helping the people of Wales to improve their health. In my constituency, the Withybush general hospital has recently won the *Sunday Times* award for the best district hospital in the United Kingdom. Since 1982, when the Pembrokeshire health authority was established, total throughput has increased by 71 per cent. There has been a 21 per cent. increase in in-patients and a 24 per cent. increase in out-patients. There has been a 112 per cent. increase in day cases. I am pleased to say that £130,000 from the waiting list initiative has been used to reduce the number of people waiting for hip operations in Pembrokeshire. The list has been reduced dramatically in the past three months.

That is the Government's record on Health Service expenditure in Wales. I am glad to say that the health authority in my constituency is leading the way in pioneering new techniques, reducing expenditure on cleaning and other services and providing more money for patient care.

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

When it comes to local government expenditure, I am especially concerned about the way in which Dyfed county council is going about its budgeting exercise. A report in the *Tenby Observer* on 16 February reported the words of the chairman of the finance committee, Councillor Tom Parry of Haverfordwest, which is in my constituency, when talking about Dyfed's budget. He said:

"this is not a standstill budget. Allowance has been made for extra spending. Enough is enough and I am obliged to tell you that this budget is more than enough."

The finance committee took no notice of Councillor Parry. Instead, it set up a special committee to find ways of spending yet more public money at the expense of the Dyfed community charge payers. That is because the largest party representation on the county council belongs to the Labour party. Having been warned by the chairman of the finance committee that the council was spending more than it should, it went ahead and increased the budget by yet another £1 million. That is irresponsible behaviour in the extreme. It is unfair to my constituents when the council, having been told that enough is enough and having already increased its expenditure, should ignore the chairman of the finance committee and insist on spending more.

Dyfed county council is being irresponsible because the largest party representation is that of the Labour party, but I am pleased to say that it is likely that the community charge in Pembrokeshire will be less than £200 per head. That is less than £5 a week for every citizen aged 18 years or over. The charge means that those who receive rebates of 80 per cent. will be paying about 80p a week towards the services which they receive as constituents and voters in my constituency.

The community charge is a fair charge. I have not yet heard from any Labour Member any reason why half the population should be able to receive the services of the local authorities and be able to vote in elections to determine how good those services should be and the cost of them but make no contribution towards financing them. That does not seem a fair system.

In the past, Labour Members have said that they do not like the rating system. They have acknowledged that it is unfair. It is indeed unfair that an old lady living on her own and using the local authority's services once should have to pay the same in rates as three or four adults who live in the house next door, who use the services three or four times as much and who have three or four votes. Surely that is—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members are jeering. They do not care about pensioners in their constituencies. I care about my elderly constituents who are suffering under the unfair rating system. I am glad that they will be much better off when the community charge is implemented.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman starred in a recent television programme about the miners' strike. He told us that Scargill was wrong and that he, the hon. Gentleman, had to force the Welsh miners to go on strike. He admitted that they did so against their will. This is the hon. Gentleman who wishes to intervene. I am sure that he will explain to the House the Labour party's alternative to the rating system and the community charge. I hope that he will do so, because it seems that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside has no idea what it is. Perhaps the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) can help him.

Dr. Kim Howells: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his marvellous trailer. It was terrific. Will he acknowledge that the jeers from my right hon. and hon. Friends and me were not the result of a lack of compassion for those who are in the predicament which he described? We jeered because we are constantly faced with the appalling cliché which he introduced. We would not have done so if the hon. Gentleman had expressed intelligent thought. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will pick up his act as a result of our jeers.

Mr. Bennett: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that all the single old-age pensioners who live in my contituency are clichés, that shows that he does not understand the problems that they face. The elderly person who lives on his own provides the starkest example of the unfairness of the rating system.

It seems that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is about to leave us. Indeed, he is leaving.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): My hon. Friend has had enough.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friends and I have not had enough of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. He promised to tell us what the Labour party's policy would be, and then there was silence. Will it be the roof tax, with its capital values and a local income tax? If it is, that will be manifestly unfair. Council tenants who have no control over the value of their assets will be charged more if they live in a council house that is of greater value than one which is occupied by another tenant.

Such a system will mean that, when the public have been fleeced once by a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer in Downing street, they will be fleeced a second time by the 400 "chancellors of the exchequer" in town halls throughout the country. If the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside wants to be treated seriously, it is time that he stopped sitting on the fence and explained the Labour party's alternative to the community charge.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he has some ideas.

Mr. Williams: We have heard of the hon. Gentleman's concern for elderly people in his constituency who live on their own, and about the inequity of the rating system. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said, we all share the hon. Gentleman's concern for those people. Dyfed has the lowest average male earnings of any county in Britain. What does the hon. Gentleman have to say to the 20,000 or 50,000 people in his constituency who are on low pay, who live in ordinary houses but are not eligible for any rebate under the community charge system, and who will lose heavily when their community charge bills arrive in a few weeks' time?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. A married man with two children younger than 11 years who earns £157 per week will be eligible for a rebate on his community charge. [HON MEMBERS: "How much?"] Opposition Members should listen. People who receive

income support will be given an 80 per cent. rebate. Those people, and students, will pay about 80p per week in my constituency for local government services. I do not think that that is an unreasonable contribution to make for the services that the local authority provides and for their right to vote in local council elections. I think that we shall in future see greater accountability by local authorities. All the electors—not just half of them or, in some areas, a third—will be making a contribution towards the services which they receive. Voters will want to know why there are different levels of service and different charges in different parts of Wales.

I shall make one more reference to local government and then speak briefly about education before I resume my place.

Mr. Rowlands: Come on.

Mr. Bennett: I have been generous. Unlike the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who would not give way to most hon. Members who wished to intervene, I have given way to every Labour Member who has wanted to intervene in my speech. I am always willing to do that.

Mr. Morgan: Twenty minutes!

Mr. Bennett: I have spoken for only 18 minutes, not 20 minutes.

I believe that we should scrap the county councils. It has become clear during the debate on the community charge that it is absurd to have three tiers of local government. I am glad of the support of the Liberal party in Wales, which supported my ten-minute Bill on this issue last year.

Unfortunately, the Labour party, which first brought forward the idea, voted against it. It began with the same idea of having 16 or 17 all-purpose local authorities. It then took the view that there should be 25. Its latest suggestion is 37 all-purpose local authorities. That is because the Labour party does not dare to say boo to any sitting councillor in Wales who might be out of a job if it is decided to have 16 or 17 authorities. The Labour party wants as many all-purpose local authorities in Wales as the various authorities that already exist. I believe that we ought to cut the number of district councils in half by amalgamation and scrap the county councils. We could save the public in Wales a considerable amount of money.

Education is of great importance to my constituents, and I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office, is here. Yesterday, in answer to a parliamentary question from myself, he announced that the consultation document on compulsory Welsh as part of the national curriculum had been issued. We have been waiting for more than a year to hear the results of applications made by schools in my constituency for exemption from compulsory Welsh.

I hope that my hon. Friend will listen carefully to the views expressed by teachers, governors and parents fron schools in south Pembrokeshire and mid-Pembrokeshire. They pointed out that there is no objection to the teaching of Welsh—every secondary school in Pembrokeshire teaches Welsh—but they object to the compulsory element in years one to three. I hope that the Minister will listen carefully to the arguments of my constituents on the need to encourage the growth of Welsh language and culture without making it compulsory, as that alienates people.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: To make the position clear, as my hon. Friend has said, we have issued a consultative document. There will be consultation on that document, and I hasten to assure my hon. Friend that there will be consultation on the order before it is made.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that statement, which will be widely welcomed in Pembrokeshire.

In the past 10 years we have seen a rapid transformation of the Welsh economy. We are no longer dependent on two or three heavy industries. A wide range of industry is now available. Morale is growing and excitement permeates the whole of Welsh life and the Welsh economy. In large part, that is due to the leadership given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. When I listened to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, there was no contest. The people of Wales will decide at the next election to return this Government with a resounding majority, and we will have more Conservative Members representing Welsh constituencies.

7.1 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I should like to respond to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), as distinct from the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), because I have a great deal of respect for the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West. I am sure that all Opposition Members extend sympathy to him and to his constituents in the situation that they are now facing. We all appreciate the fact that he has had to leave the House to return to his constituents, and I should like to put on record our appreciation of his courage and honesty. He revealed his true personality today. He revealed the flaws in the leadership of the Conservative party and of the Government. Under extensive pressure, he exercised his democratic right and explained fairly his criticism of the Government, and I applaud his loyalty to the truth. If we read the banner headline in the *Evening Standard*—

"Thatcher bids to stem panic"—

and how she is trying to convince some members of her Government and some of her Back Benchers to support the poll tax, I wonder what reward the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West would have got if we had had this situation then. After undoubted pressure from No. 10, within seven weeks he was deselected.

When I asked the Prime Minister at Question Time two weeks ago to explain how democracy works within her party, my question was ruled out of order, because it was not her responsibility. Whatever the reasoning behind that ruling—perhaps it was brought about by a flash of lightning—nevertheless I believe, as do a number of my colleagues, that it was her responsibility. Clearly it is her vindictive hand and brain that manipulated the very hon. Gentleman's deselection in Clwyd, North-West. It was typical of the tyranny that prevails under the right hon. Lady's dictatorship. I say that, knowing that tomorrow night I shall attend my final reselection meeting in Ogmore, and that I risk the wrath of my constituents and of hon. Members for saying such a thing.

We listened for a long time earlier this evening to the Secretary of State talking about the situation that the Government inherited in 1979.

Mr. Raffan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: No, I do not intend to give way. I did not ask the hon. Gentleman to give way, so he can save his back.

In 1979, Ogmore was happy, industrial, prosperous, cultural and contented and it played its part in contributing to the wealth and prosperity of the Principality and of this country. The market town was booming, pits and industry were progressing and developing and were providing employment, education and training for the skills to meet the ever-demanding changes in technology from the new industries. I remind the House that those new industries, such as the Ford and the Sony factories at Bridgend, were brought in by a Labour Government. Numerous other factories were the product of the previous Labour Government.

In Ogmore at that time there was an electorate of 83,000, and an unemployment rate of 3·7 per cent., and most of the unemployed were unemployable because of industrial diseases such as silicosis and pneumoconiosis.

My constituents look back to the years of the previous Labour Government with memories of secure jobs, free education for their children and few worries over paying mortgages and rates. They were contented in the knowledge that their hospital needs and health care were guaranteed. The pensioners, the disabled and those suffering from pneumoconiosis, silicosis or other illnesses, caused by a lifetime's work in the pits, expressed pride and contentment in the knowledge that they were protected by a caring Government. It was a Government who were struggling with economic problems forced on them by world economic factors, but they still cared for the sick and the underprivileged.

North sea oil was on stream, but was not running into the Treasury coffers then. What a difference it would have made if a Labour Government had had all that bounty to distribute through the economy. The German and the Japanese industrial successes, as we know them today, would pale into insignificance by comparison.

Yet the electors, swayed by false promises of tax reductions, of no increase in VAT and of full employment —I could go on at length because I have the 1979 Conservative manifesto here—voted for the Government. What happened then? Overnight my constituency suffered some of the most cruel, instant, industrial rape. It could never have been envisaged by any political organisation other than by the Government. Thousands of steel workers were thrown out of jobs. Thousands of miners were thrown out of work. Factories, offices and shops closed down. That wilful political hurricane hit my constituency worse than the present series of hurricanes that have raged over the country.

My constituents are proud, industrious, adaptable and ready to build a new life, but they will never forget the decade of this Tory Government. We are picking up the ashes and preparing for a new Government who will clear out, erase and extinguish for ever the Thatcher era of the 1980s.

The 1990s will be open to the return of a caring, compassionate, responsible Government. I do not know what the Government Whip is laughing at. These are the promises that we are making. We shall carry out our promises, unlike the promises that the Conservative Government made in 1979, 1983 and 1987 and never carried out. Those who have deliberately exploited the cruel, coarse, brutal, dictatorial attitude of the Prime Minister and her henchmen will be exposed for creating a society with the stench of corruption, greed, selfishness and avarice, which is their only legacy of the 1980s.

We in Wales can blame the Secretary of State for most of the devastation because he was a member of the Cabinet throughout. I regret that he is not in his place. I have often asked, is it not passing strange, to say the least, that despite all the right hon. Gentleman's so-called wet colleagues having received the chop, the right hon. Gentleman has remained? The list is significant and I had better put it on the record. There is Lord St. John of Fawsley, Lord Pym, Lord Prior and Lord Joseph. Sir Leon Brittan has gone to Europe, and the right hon. Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), for Guildford (Mr. Howell), for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore), for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) have also left the Government.

The list of those who have disagreed with the diktats of the ayatollah and who have been sacked or forced to resign is endless and it could make up two Cabinets. But the Secretary of State for Wales is not on that list, so I beg the question: is he a wet or is he a weed? What has he accomplished in Wales? What was his role during the miners' strike—that bitter battle, not about wages, better and safer working conditions or any issue that would benefit the miners, but to save their pits and their jobs? That was what the struggle was for.

Last week we viewed once again televised extracts of the miners' strike, and the Secretary of State was in the thick of all the intrigue that went on then. He was involved in the appointment of Mr. MacGregor. Was his remit to crush the miners and his reward a Cabinet post of whatever sort during the Prime Minister's reign? It is passing strange, to say the least, that he is one of only two so-called wets—the other being a Welshman, the Leader of the House—who have survived in the Cabinet since 1979.

Personal abuse is not one of my specialities, so I want to speak briefly about the real issue affecting Wales. But my personal criticisms could be extended to most of the Prime Minister's henchmen. Chris Buckland, the chief political editor of the *Daily Express*, last Thursday in "Inside Politics" said:

> "There are not many MPs you would choose as partners for a trip into the jungle and with Tory MPs even a journey to a safari park would be risky—start limping and most of them would throw you into the lions' enclosure, if only to claim a refund on your admission ticket."

That is from a Tory paper.

It is only on rare occasions that we can pose questions to the Secretary of State. Numerous Tories have infiltrated recent Welsh questions. Last Tuesday Scottish Tories were called. Wales has 25 Labour Members of Parliament, three Welsh Nationalists and three Liberals, but only seven Tories. The number of Opposition Members called in the 35 minutes available was deplorable. There is a desperate need for that imbalance to be remedied.

The Secretary of State cannot possibly be aware of the problems of the people in Wales, representing Worcester as he does. When does he hold a surgery in Wales to discover the problems and the worries of the Welsh people? We who represent constituencies in Wales are well informed of and well acquainted with our constituents' worries, hopes and aspirations. The very least that we

demand is the opportunity to question the Secretary of State on matters of concern. We do not want merely 35 minutes for 38 Members every five weeks, a Welsh Grand Committee three times a year and our one debate a year on St. David's day. It is not the Secretary of State's fault, but it would have been far more reasonable to appoint a Welsh Member of Parliament to his office, not a Member from outside the Principality with little accountability to the House. He has little contact with the Welsh people and their problems and worries. Only if he came from Wales could he and his advisers appreciate the frustration, hardship and despair that many are facing, from the bankrupt business man to the small trader, the one-parent families, the teachers, the sick, the elderly, the poor, the disadvantaged and the homeless. Some desperate people cannot afford their mortgage payments and they face the even more frightening problem of paying the iniquitous poll tax. Will the Government and the Welsh Office gain financially from the introduction of the poll tax?

We still have the problem of the unemployed, yet the Secretary of State simply reels out figures dismissing the real problems of people without jobs. He tries to tell us that unemployment is coming down, but he does not appreciate that the Government's policies since 1979 were responsible for the high unemployment in the first place.

One thing on which I must congratulate the Secretary of State is his high profile engineered by his public relations team. Reams of statistics have been sent to us in the past week or so, but I was disappointed with one document that landed on my desk yesterday. The Secretary of State had better bring someone to task for it. I do not know whether the Minister of State is listening, but the document was entitled "Welsh Industry and Commerce". It has 48 pages, plenty of pictures and a lovely glossy cover but, astonishingly, there is not one photograph of the Secretary of State, despite the thousands that British Rail and everywhere else have been flooded with. He must take note of that and draw it to the attention of his public relations people.

We should have a day's debate on the poll tax, but as many of my hon. Friends want to speak, I shall be brief. The right hon. Member for Henley was once a prominent Minister who constantly told us how we should run local government and defence, and who decided to quit over the Westland affair. He said that he opposed the poll tax in Cabinet 10 years ago.

The new-found friend of the Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), appeared in the press last week. It presented photographs of a pleasurable, pleasing, practically plausible and plantonic prelude to his celebration of 40 years in the House. But what did that loyal friend of the Prime Minister say about the poll tax? He said that it should never have been introduced, that it is unfair and iniquitous and that it is flawed because it is unfair. I wonder whether their new-found friendship will continue after that.

I should like to make a few comments about the well-known "Tarzan"—the Mace weightlifter—who is now drugged with ambition to replace the ayatollah. I am sure that everyone is aware that the right hon. Member for Henley resigned over Westland, but this week he revealed that he should have left the Cabinet in 1981 because he disagreed about the introduction of the poll tax and claimed that it would not work. It has taken him 10 years to reveal his innermost thoughts, yet he was prepared to accept the office of Secretary of State for the Environment. What sort of people have been running the country over the past 10 years who cannot stand up to the Prime Miniter and speak the truth?

My final comments are from another ex-Minister, the right hon. Member for Brent, North. He warns of a return to Rachmanism because of landlords compelling tenants to pay their own poll tax and rent, which at present includes rates. He says that if tenants complain, they will be out on their heels. What will the Government do about that anomaly? What will the Secretary of State for Wales do about that problem in Wales? We have 100,000 homeless people, but how many more will there be when that form of Rachmanism is introduced?

7.22 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), to whom I listened with much interest.

My hon. Friend made a pertinent point about what the Secretary of State for Wales is doing about the poll tax. He mentioned many right hon. Members who are no longer Cabinet Ministers because of their opposition to the ayatollah. The people of Wales would like to know what the Secretary of State has been doing about the poll tax.

The Labour party is committed to introducing a new tax that is fair, that is easy to collect and not bureaucratic, that is not paid by people who are too poor and that is less onerous; and it is certainly possible to introduce such a tax. It will not be easy to introduce such a tax after the fiasco of the poll tax, but it will be based broadly on the value of property. It will be easy to collect; it will be fair because poor people will not have to pay it; and it will not be onerous. That is as far as Labour Members need go, because the argument is not what Labour will do when it takes office but what the Government have done.

I was amazed that the Secretary of State had nothing to say about the poll tax. Until he was asked about it by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), all he could do was mouth, "What is the alternative?" The alternative is clear and is perceived by the Welsh people; it certainly is not the poll tax. I have no worries about arguing that the poll tax should be abandoned as quickly as possible.

I was amazed by the speech of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). He pleaded for improvements to the A477, for the removal of tolls on the Cleddau bridge, for a better rail network and for better Sprinters, yet he condemned Dyfed county council for levying a poll tax to try to provide those services.

Unless I am mistaken, the A477 is a county road and the responsibility of Dyfed county council. Cleddau bridge is the responsibility of Dyfed county council, which, in co-operation with British Rail, also has responsibilities to provide grants to improve railway services. It is a pity the hon. Member for Pembroke is not present, yet we hear such speeches day in and day out from members of the present-day Tory party. They condemn local authorities for trying to maintain public services, yet make special pleadings: "In my back yard, I want no tolls across my bridge; in my back yard, I want decent railway services; in my back yard, I do not want potholes in my roads." Making such statements will do the hon. Member for Pembroke no good whatever, because the public in Wales are not daft and will see through them.

[Dr. John Marek]

I agreed almost entirely with the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), in particular with his comments on cancer treatment. He was right in what he said about people from Gwynedd and north Clwyd. He had the sense—it is not always obvious in speeches made by Conservative Members—to realise that people in south Clwyd see their priorities slightly differently, but I do not want to detract from what he said.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West rightly argued for capital infrastructure for British Rail. We must spend from capital to renew our infrastructure. British Rail will have to pay for all the damage in north Wales from its own revenue. That means that passengers will have to pay, and I wonder what the hon. Member for Pembroke would say to that. Our road and rail systems must be funded properly from general taxation. Ministers should be arguing for a first-class road and rail system throughout the Principality. Costs should not always fall on the backs of the commuter or passenger through extra fares.

Clwyd county council's standard spending assessment is £50 less than that of other counties in Wales. When I asked the Minister why, he said, "Unemployment is lower in Clwyd." He failed to realise—my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) made this point—that people in Clwyd are poorly paid. Just as Dyfed may have the lowest male wages in Britain, so Clwyd has the worst female wages. According to recent statistics, women are paid less in Clwyd than anywhere else in Britain.

It is no use pretending otherwise, because people in Wrexham, Alyn and Deeside and Delyn understand that the going rate in a screwdriver industry is £2·30 an hour, that one receives no training and that one has no career prospects. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent that at least we have that instead of unemployment and the dole queue, but let us not make any mistake: we are becoming a deskilled nation; our people do not have the opportunity to learn skills and are generally far worse paid than they were 10 years ago.

I hope that the Welsh Office will take seriously the problems of Clwyd county council. If the standard spending assessment is less for spurious reasons, it should be no surprise that the poll tax is higher there than in the rest of Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): I intervene only because the hon. Gentleman said that the standard spending assessment is less for spurious reasons. The formula on which it is worked out was agreed by the local authorities themselves.

Dr. Marek: That is exactly what the Secretary of State for Wales said. But it was not agreed by the Clwyd representative, and, of course, it was not freely agreed by the local authorities in Wales. There was also the heavy hand of the Welsh Office telling them to agree it along those lines, or else. It was not entirely as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

However, the principle is clear: if some of the figures that are used for deciding the standard spending assessment are faulty and the standard spending assessment is less than it should be, necessarily the poll tax figure will be higher than it should be to maintain the standard of service. That is the problem. It is a great pity that the Secretary of State for Wales did not accept my request during Welsh questions that he meet a deputation from Clwyd county council to sort out the problems.

Let us make no mistake. Clwyd county councillors and Members of Parliament representing Clwyd constituencies are desperately worried for their own people. They do not want their people paying a pound more than is necessary in poll tax. Unfortunately, they will have to do so because of mistakes by the Welsh Office and by central Government in London, and worst of all because of the leadership of the Prime Minister.

It is not just Labour Members who are worried. On 13 February, the hon Member for Clwyd, North-West said:

"It so happens that the county I represent and part of my constituency have both, in their separate ways, been clobbered very heavily by the change in the formula used for assessing the Government contribution to the revenue support grant."

He went on to say of Clwyd county council's £223 poll tax:

"I do not think much of this can be attributed to extravagance or mismanagement. A great deal of it is due to the reduction in the level of the revenue support grant coming through this new formula."—[*Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 181.]

I know whom the people of Clwyd will believe. They will believe the explanation of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West and Labour Members representing Clwyd constituencies for what is happening in Clwyd at the moment. They certainly will not believe the hon. Members for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). If Welsh Office Ministers had any integrity in the matter, they would talk to Clwyd county councillors to try to sort out the problem, make a proper realistic assessment and admit their mistakes.

I hope that the Welsh Office will address the problem of flooding in the north of the county. It is a serious problem and a social fund, crisis grants and cash payments must be freely available to people who have suffered. In his answer on Tuesday to a private notice question from the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, the Secretary of State for Wales did not address that problem.

The worries of farmers in Wales need to be taken into account, and compensation paid. It is available in Scotland, so why not in Wales? Is the Secretary of State for Wales a Thatcherite, or does he have freedom of action to look after the people of Wales? That is a serious question, and I should like to know the answer.

I shall not speak for too long, as time is limited and I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak. I hope that the Welsh Office does not take what I have said lightly, because we are in a serious position. The poll tax is about to be foisted on the people of Wales and none of them wants it. Even the militants in the Tory party in Clwyd, North-West do not want the poll tax. But if we have to have it, it should be mitigated as much as possible. Welsh Office Ministers can do something about it. They could start by meeting local authority associations. They could certainly meet Clwyd county councillors. Most important of all, if we are to believe that the Secretary of Wales is not simply a Thatcher clone and a faceless man in the Prime Minister's Cabinet, we want to hear something from him pretty quickly.

7.34 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): For a moment I thought that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was going to be very brave and tell us the Labour party's

alternative to the community charge. But after a few weasel words he dodged away from the issue and, like the rest of his party, refused to answer. Is not he demonstrating that, as we have come to realise, the Labour party does not have an alternative—or at least nothing like a clearly thought out, comprehensive answer?

I was amazed to hear the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) say that he did not specialise in personal abuse. Surely he meant that it comes naturally to him so he does not have to specialise in it. I appreciate what he said about my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who is a man of the greatest integrity and has acted honestly throughout. While I reject with total contempt the unworthy and unfounded suggestion that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had any part in the matter, I shall be very sorry if my hon. Friend is not here representing Clwyd, North-West after the next general election.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State tell us about the Welsh Development Agency's announcement of a new property development programme to provide 6,000 new jobs in Wales. I share my right hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the future of Wales and specifically his target of a further fall in unemployment figures in Wales of 39,000 to give Wales a lower rate of unemployment than the present rate in the south-east of England. That is a most admirable target and I wish him all good speed.

The 6,000 jobs from the Welsh Development Agency are in addition to other important developments that are already under way—the expansion of Ford, the arrival of Bosch and Toyota and the valuable developments in the financial services industry with National Provident Institution and the Trustee Savings Bank coming to south Wales. I admit to being glad that four of those developments—Ford, Bosch, NPI and TSB—are coming to the effective travel-to-work area of my constituency of Cardiff, North. I am pleased that my constituency has one of the lowest unemployment rates—if not the lowest—for any constituency in Wales. I give credit to all that has been done by my right hon. Friend and everyone who has worked so hard.

Wales continues to have a tremendous record of attracting inward investment. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) began by congratulating my right hon. Friend and everyone else who has worked so hard to achieve that tremendous record. That was a very positive opening paragraph. What a pity and what a sad shame that it was the only positive contribution in his entire speech, which included the most amazing contradiction. He blithely demanded higher wages for workers—a policy which can only lead to pricing workers out of employment in Wales—and went on to express his apprehension that Wales would lose out to eastern Europe in further inward investment. Clearly he has no awareness of the impact of what he says, when he is prepared to say something. On major issues, such as Labour's roof tax, the hon. Gentleman will not say anything. He refuses, he dodges, he squirms and he wriggles. What is the beef? He cannot answer.

We hear sedentary comments from Opposition Members about, "When Labour comes to power." They speak about "when" not "if". I suppose that we shall be told next, "When the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside becomes Secretary of State for Wales." I bet that the hon. Gentleman secretly dreads that prospect and joins me in being grateful that it will never come about. If he had to come to the Dispatch Box as Secretary of State, he would have to provide answers, which he cannot and will not do now. Perhaps he would prefer that the job of Secretary of State for Wales might yet be offered to one of the 23 other Welsh Labour Members who, the *Western Mail* told us, turned the job down last time it was touted around. The hon. Gentleman should not become downhearted and he should carry on in his own way. He has all our encouragement because we know that he is the best that Labour has.

The current level of interest rates is significant for the Welsh economy. All of us are aware of high interest rates and their consequences. I firmly believe that the policy on interest rates has been right, but it will not be a surprise if I say that I am not looking forward to a further 1 per cent. increase in lending rates. The medicine has been right, but we must avoid any overdosing which might kill the patient, however well-intentioned that dose was. I am not thinking here primarily of all those of us who are paying mortgages. Building society lending represents about 80 per cent. of total lending, so it cannot be ignored and all of us who pay mortgages must be aware of the significance of interest rates. It would be fair to describe mortgages as painful, but not as catastrophic.

I am especially concerned with the effects on business and industry in Wales. I have the benefit of many contacts in business and industry throughout Wales. My own company, Messrs Bowring Wales Limited, is probably the leading insurance broker in Wales. I listen especially to what people in banking tell me. They tell me that an increasing number of companies are on what they call their critical list. Little movement is involved between profit and loss and a little more movement again may be all that it takes to move from loss to liquidation.

We know that our economy is fundamentally sound, but we cannot avoid contemplating the downside of what an overdose of interest rates might do to damage that fundamentally sound economy. Already there is a disincentive to investment. Anyone considering further investment has to think long and hard about the rates of about 15 to 17 per cent. Any company with money of its own which it could have ploughed into expanding its own business could reflect that it could presently earn more by leaving the money on deposit with a bank than by making the expansion which we should all like to see.

We must consider whether that threatens the better future which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spelled out. It is widely appreciated that higher interest rates are a price we have had to pay for inflation and for the balance of payments deficit. However, many Welsh business men are asking why British interest rates have to be significantly higher and have to contain a differential over the interest rates being charged by our major competitors: Germany, Japan and the United States of America.

I do not look forward to another 1 per cent. increase in interest rates, but I look forward to a narrowing of that differential. I know that we have to be concerned that there should be no premature reductions in interest rates. We have to be concerned about any withdrawal of investment money from Britain to overseas chasing superior interest rates. I have even heard the comment that we should be concerned that so much hot money is moving around and that we might lose it. Should we properly be concerned about hot money?

Dr. Marek: There would be a run on the pound if we lost it.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is right. We must avoid a run on the pound. I am not advocating a panicky and incautious approach, but I want to speculate about the possibility of a narrowing of the differential between the interest rates that we charge and those in other countries. Have we a shortage of investment money in Britain? No. We have an overseas portfolio second only to that of Japan and we have money invested around the world. We still have a strong pool of investment money here for investment in Britain. We have a strong pool of investors. Let us consider the success of the water flotation and the way in which the man in the street gave his endorsement to the idea that the people can now own the water industries of Britain. Let us consider the enthusiastic way in which the offer was taken up, and the oversubscription and constant movement in the share price. That is one more indicator of the desire to invest in Britain.

Welsh business men also have questions about the exchange rates between the pound and other currencies. I detect here that there is far more a note of approval, with the position of the pound being somewhat more favourable against the deutschmark and thus being a great aid for Welsh business men who are involved in exports. They are the business men, to whom my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred earlier, who are contemplating expansion and other opportunities in Germany. However, is there not scope for more movement in exchange rates? Is there scope for reducing the interest rate differential which would inevitably be counterbalanced by an appropriate movement in the exchange rate? If, as now seems inevitable, we are to join the European monetary system, might it not be better if we were locked into the EMS at a lower rate than we have now?

My last subject is the burden that many people in Wales are having to face because of the actions of their local councils in setting, in too many instances, ridiculously high community charges. That is very inflationary. The community charge is a far fairer system than the rating system it replaces. I have called some councils in Wales "crazy". I think that I may have been wrong to use that description because it implied that they were irresponsible and needed only to be certified to be found not guilty for their actions. They are certainly the guilty councils. The councils in Cardiff and South Glamorgan, for example, which are close to home, are being condemned by their peers. On 20 December 1989, the Council of Welsh District Councils produced its own summary of the figures that it felt would be appropriate for community charges. The council estimated that the figure for Cardiff, including the precept of South Glamorgan county council, should be £193. In fact, Cardiff council levied £253. Its guilt is proved just by that.

I appreciate that in the major change from rating to the community charge there will be some natural confusion in the minds of the ratepayers, now the community chargepayers. Inevitably, there will be an increase of about 7·7 per cent. as we are moving from one financial year to another. However, several councils in Wales, especially those in Cardiff and South Glamorgan, are taking rank political advantage of the confusion and are attempting to blame it on the Government.

In Cardiff, the budget process was proceeding quite normally until it was found that there was not enough expenditure to justify the intended community charge. There was desperation in trying to find ways of soaking up the extra money. Committees were circulated and asked to find extra spending. Other devices were used to try to boost expenditure up to the figure that had been announced nine months previously. I say as strongly as I can to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that Cardiff and South Glamorgan, in particular, and other councils in Wales, must be capped or there will be a ridiculous increase in spending.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State says that the county councils have to file their expenditure plans today—1 March—and the district councils will have to do the same in a few days' time. I hope that as soon as my right hon. Friend sees the spending assessments he will publish figures showing what the equivalent rate increase would have been. We should then be able to see on the old basis of comparison what changes have taken place. I am afraid that my own council—Cardiff—will still be the worst nigger in the woodpile, with an increase of at least 110 per cent. There is no justification for an increase of 110 per cent. It is ludicrous.

I ask my ministerial friends not just to cap but to take action so that councils that make illogial decisions in setting the community charge cannot then interfere with essential services. I see that as the obvious danger. We all know where the money has been hidden. Let me give the House one of the best examples of that. As a way of soaking up the money, South Glamorgan increased its contingency fund from £7 million to £15 million at the last minute. Without that, £20 could immediately have been taken off the community charge in South Glamorgan.

Fortunately, the political consequences lie with the Labour party. We have had this before in Cardiff. Last time the rates were increased by almost this much—by 94½ per cent.—the people of Cardiff reacted by delivering the Left such a hefty blow that they brought the Conservative party in by a landslide. The Labour party has done us a great favour by placing the firmest footstep for Cardiff and South Glamorgan moving back into Conservative control. The people of Cardiff will not forget this savage attack.

I entirely dismiss what I read in the opinion polls. It is nothing more than an Ardennes offensive being feverishly directed from the bunker by the leader of the Labour party. We know that it is blighted, as the last Ardennes offensive was because you cannot fool all the people of Wales all the time, and that is what the Labour party has been expecting. I am confident that, come the next general election, we shall have fewer Sandinistas on the Opposition Benches than we have now.

7.52 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I shall not follow the argument of the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) because it is not worthy of being followed. I shall only give him a little advice. If he thinks that the political consequences of the poll tax will not be visited upon him and his Government, he has not learnt much in his few years in the House.

On St. David's day last year, I had the privilege to represent a constituency in which there were four working pits. Next door, there were Oakdale and Marine, which were about to be closed. Now, a year later, two of the four

pits in my community and two neighbouring pits have been closed. Two other pits—including one in my constituency—are now in jeopardy.

It has become a curious feature of Welsh political and industrial life that anyone who speaks about the coal industry is regarded as a Neanderthal man who speaks for interests marginal to the Welsh economy. But in our communities those pits mattered economically and socially and because of the wages, powers and rights that they gave our communities. The fact that in the 12 months from one St. David's day to the next I have lost four of the pits in the immediate vicinity of my constituency, which lies in the heart of the south-east Wales coalfield, is not a matter for great rejoicing. Nor should it invite the observation, as I expect it will, that there are alternative jobs. It is a matter of profound regret, and we should say so.

Traditionally, the Secretary of State reacts in pavlovian manner every time anyone mentions pit closures. He says, "But there were pit closures under a Labour Government." The Secretary of State is in danger of becoming unique. He could become the Secretary of State for Wales who presided not over pit closures in Wales but over the complete closure of the south Wales coalfield. There are only six pits left and two pits are in jeopardy —Blaenant and Deep Navigation. We may have two more St. David's days to go before the next general election—it seems probable in the light of opinion polls. Perhaps the Secretary of State will set a new record, which he cannot claim for a previous Labour or Conservative Secretary of State. He may preside, as I said, over the closure altogether of the coalfield.

Let us make one plea. By all means, chase the Koreans and the Japanese. Obviously there is a lot of political sex appeal in going round the world encouraging inward investment. But please also pay attention to the industry that is already there—to the industry that is at home and to the jobs that are available. I think that the Secretary of State was genuinely taken by surprise by the actions of Mr. Wheatley—a person alien to our society—who was brought in with the specific job of butchering the south Wales industry to prepare British Coal for privatisation. The Secretary of State did not realise the speed or the vehemence with which he would pursue the pit closure programme, and nor did the Under-Secretary of State, who will remember our conversations last summer about the pit closures. The Welsh Office was taken by surprise. But, having seen Mr. Wheatley at work, Ministers must not be taken by surprise any more. Two more pits are in jeopardy and I want the Secretary of State and the Welsh office to spend some time thinking and worrying about the existing industry.

It is interesting that in every article—in the *Western Mail* and elsewhere—that I have read recently, the Secretary of State and others have been quoted as saying that some marvellous transformation of the Welsh economy has taken place because we have only 6,000 miners but 60,000 bank employees. I do not know whether it is a matter of regret that we have only 6,000 miners left and, in the process, we have locked off millions and millions of tonnes of good reserves that we shall never get back.

It is a rather superficial notion that we can build our new Welsh economy on the service sector. Of course, the service sector has brought many good things to our communities—especially my own, where we have the business park at Pentrebach, the regional office of the Welsh Development Agency and the Heads of the Valley industrial estate at the top of Rhymney. That is great encouragement because infrastructure and investment matter for the future. The Secetary of State can claim credit for it; my local authorities are perfectly entitled to claim credit for it and in a modest way even I might claim a piece of the credit for it. It does not matter who claims credit for it. All the developments are positive, but the notion that somehow the service sector, the service economy, the bank employees represent a good, firm basis for a new future for the local economies of our communities is a matter of doubt.

I want to raise two other matters concerning the service economy—not in relation to the Cardiffs of this world but in relation to the Merthyrs and Rhymneys of this world. The service society and service industries and economies of the valleys communities are not about having sophisticated banking systems. We have had no influx of sophisticated banking systems. Nor have we seen any signs of the computer software industry that supposedly symbolises the service economy. Nor have we had highly skilled modern office employment—with one notable exception when Hoover's headquarters moved from Perivale to Rhymney. That was an adjunct to a manufacturing operation.

For Merthyr and Rhymney, those great terms mean, not a sophisticated aspect of the service sector, but nothing more nor less—I say it in a completely neutral way—than creating retailing jobs. The two characteristics of all the new retailing jobs in out-of-town superstores and so on are that they are part time and poorly paid. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and others challenged the Secretary of State for Wales at the beginning of the debate about the number of jobs and the quality and wages that went with them. They were right to do so. We have swapped well-paid skilled jobs in manufacturing for semi-skilled or unskilled, poorly paid jobs. That is not a fair swap, nor is it necessarily the basis on which to create a new, sound economy.

I am deeply worried about the predominance of the service economy. It is not and cannot be immune from the trends and movements of the wider economy. The thrust of mainstream Government policy of high interest rates is that we must cut consumption because the economy has got out of hand. If consumption is cut, what happens? Where does consumption take place? It takes place in the retail service sector, which is supposed to be our new salvation.

Mr. Barry Jones: It is next.

Mr. Rowlands: As my hon. Friend says, it will be next. Indeed, there are terrible tell-tale signs that it will be next. Is it not a matter of anxiety to anyone who believes that the service sector is the future that Mr. Ashcroft, the man who personified the Thatcherite revolution, and his company Coloroll are now in the deepest financial difficulties? Habitat, represented by Terence Conran, is also in difficulties.

Mr. Barry Jones: And Laura Ashley.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend mentions Laura Ashley. The service sector—the basis on which jobs were created—was utterly dependent on the consumption power of the local communities. If benefits are cut and wages reduced, if the Government say that wage inflation

[Mr. Rowlands]

of 10 per cent. is wrong and must be cut to 4 or 5 per cent., and if mortgages go up by £30 a month, consumption is sucked out of the local community. The very money that is supposed to sustain the service sector, on which the new economy is based, is sucked out.

When the Secretary of State, again in pavlovian fashion, responded to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli, he cursed us for talking down our communities. None of us does that. We are proud of the communities that we serve and represent. We spend all our time preaching their virtues and potential. But we are entitled to warn that if our new local economies are built on the shifting sands of the service sector, it could lead to as many difficulties as the dependence on the old traditional, dirty industries of coal and steel.

Another curious side effect of building an economy on the service sector is the impact on local society. One of the most striking aspects of representing a community such as Merthyr is that it has a highly developed local district centre. The Woolworths, B and Qs and Asdas have managers who have few roots. They are transient people. They do not belong to the local society. It may sound old-fashioned, but the collapse of local chambers of trade is a reflection of the decline and fall of people who run the local society and economic community. We are losing not only our traditional character, represented by our coal industry, but a sense of identity and roots in those who manage our so-called new local economy.

I look forward to an alternative economy for our communities in the 1990s, based not only on bank employees and the right and proper role of the service sector, but on something that we were good at and must become good at again—that is, making things. The community that I represent was built on making things, not on servicing things. It was built on developing skills of one kind or another. The tragedy of the past decade is the deskilling of our local communities.

Despite all the effort and considerable sums of money that were poured in through what was the Manpower Services Commission and various other systems, we ended the 1980s with not only fewer jobs but less-skilled, lower-quality and lower-paid jobs. One of the real worries from the 1980s is that, as a result of all the so-called investment and the hype of the Secretary of State, we have not prepared the community that I represent for the new challenges and opportunities of the 1990s.

8.5 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am conscious of the fact that this is our annual St. David's day debate. I cast my mind back to this day last year when with my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), I had the privilege to introduce to the House my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). That by-election marked a turning point in British politics. I date it back to January of last year. I was heavily involved in the by-election and it was a privilege to be so. In January of that year, at the launch meeting of the by-election campaign at Treforest at the polytechnic, the deputy leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), said that a pendulum swings over a period of time. The background to the by-election was that we were 10 points behind in the opinion polls. My right hon. Friend felt that the pendulum was about to move. Move it did and we had a superlative result in the Pontypridd election. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd has made a tremendous impact in the House since then. We have moved on from there and have not looked back since. We had another superlative result in Vale of Glamorgan, and the rest is history.

In 12 months we have moved from being well behind in the opinion polls to being 10, 12, 15 or 17 points ahead. The gap is growing day by day. I am proud that on St. David's day we can look back to the recovery in the fortunes of the Labour party and see that it was based on and came about in Wales.

One old wag told my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) at a rugby match in Twickenham that if he could do for Welsh rugby what he had done for the Labour party he really would be a hero. If we get a Labour Government, perhaps those crowds and grand slams will start happening again in the 1990s. Meanwhile, we have 12 or 18 months during which we must put up with the present Government.

The main anxieties of my constituents are the Health Service and the poll tax. There is one major hospital in my constituency in Glagwill, in Carmarthen. It is going through a period of crisis as we reach the end of the financial year. The hospital has overspent its budget by £125,000. It has to face cuts of one kind or another. That is set against the background of a modernisation programme. I am pleased to say that the programme is going ahead. Over a period of five years all the main ward blocks will be renovated and modernised. Modern medical technology will be introduced. I very much welcome that, although it will mean a loss of 50 of the 500 beds. That modernisation is therefore at a considerable cost.

In the next two or three months that hospital will have to work on an insufficient budget. It is also understaffed in nurses. It should have an extra 28 nurses, but it cannot afford to employ them and we obviously have the people who want to work. Is it fair to the existing nursing staff, to the doctors, but most of all to the patients, that the hospital is short-staffed?

Because of our overspending or lack of finance, in December the health authority announced that patient throughput at the hospital would be reduced to the 1988-89 level, despite the increasing demand. People are moving in to my area of Dyfed. We have an influx of retired people because it is an attractive rural area in which we live. They put more demands on the Health Service at a time when the proportion of elderly people in the population is increasing, yet at this time of increasing demand patient throughput is to be reduced to the 1988-89 level. I have asked the hospital administrator exactly what that will mean. Frankly, it means increased waiting lists, cancelled or postponed operations, out-patient appointments taking longer and perhaps fewer tests being carried out on patients. Generally, it means a lower quality of care per capita than last year. That is what is actually happening in the Health Service, despite the boasts of the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends. In my area we are living with the fact that the Health Service is not safe in the Government's hands because the quality of that service is being cut.

My constituents' other major concern is the effects of the poll tax. We are all aware of the anomalies of the rating system whereby an elderly person living on his or her own in a large family house had to pay a rates bill that was out

of proportion with that person's income. We accept the anomaly of that, but the community charge is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. I am sure that it would have been perfectly possible to remedy that anomaly without introducing something as appallingly unjust as the poll tax. It is obvious to every citizen in Britain that the fundamental injustice of the poll tax is that it is not linked to the ability to pay. Apart from the few people who are caught by the rebate system, generally the further down the income level—or the poorer the person is—the greater the penalty and the harder that person will be hit when the bills arrive.

I shall quote one paragraph of a letter that I received last year from a constituent. An elderly couple retired to my area to live in a small cottage in Clansawel near Llandeilo and the husband wrote:

"My rate demand this year for this small cottage is £61. Next year, on Mr. Walker's assessment, my wife and I will be required to pay £175 each at least. Can you explain how this huge increase can be justified? After all, we are told this new imposition is more fair. What's fair about that? Will it result in improved services, or even of the resumption of services that have been withdrawn through government action during the past decade?"

That is the unfairness of the poll tax. I know that there is transitional relief, but ultimately the bill that will arrive in that household is twice £175 for an elderly couple who live in a cottage with a rate bill of £61. That means nearly £300 extra for people who cannot afford it. The poll tax system throws up such anomalies all the time.

When I was canvassing a few month ago, I came across a young girl of 19 and asked her about her work. She was a hairdresser. As we were canvassing specifically on the poll tax, I asked her about it and encountered 100 per cent. opposition. I then had the cheek to ask her about her take-home pay. It was £47 per week, yet that young girl will have a poll tax bill of nearly £200 in a few weeks. That is the unfairness of the poll tax.

Earlier I asked the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) the same question that I asked the Secretary of State last Monday—what about the problems of low-paid people? Dyfed has the lowest average male earnings of any county in Britain. I am sorry about that, but set it out as a fact. In Carmarthen we have low unemployment, but we also have low pay because we have mainly service industries and low-paid public sector work. What about the low-paid people who live in ordinary houses and who will not be eligible for rebates? They will suffer huge losses when the poll tax bills arrive. I estimate that between 20,000 and 30,000 of my constituents will be in that position.

There is no question but that the poll tax is an evil tax. It is identified absolutely with the Government and the Prime Minister. It is very much the right hon. Lady's tax. It will become known as a Tory tax. It is one of the main reasons why the Government will be driven out of office when the next election comes, which we hope will be next year.

8.16 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I always follow the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) with pleasure because I was born there, but my pleasure is increased by the fact that his wife was born in my constituency, so that makes us all square.

This is a day on which we can talk about local issues and about the national and international perspective. It is now the time of day when one's daffodil begins to wilt a little, so I shall not speak for too long. I see that some hon. Members have been seeking sustenance for their daffodils and that some hon. Members, including the Minister of State, have leeks which were never alive in any case—as far as I am aware, anyway. Perhaps it came back with him from Brussels yesterday when he was on one of his many missions—in which case it is a Brussel sprout. *[Laughter]*.

Let us get on with the main substance of the debate. I want to talk about the way in which Wales is governed. Next month we shall celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Welsh Office—what a wonderful celebration. I put on record the fact that I am still waiting for my invitation, just in case any party has been missed off the invitation list. We remember with great affection the 10th anniversary party of the Welsh Office. I see several hon. Members in their places who were present at that party——

Mr. Foot: We had better parties in those days.

Dr. Thomas: I am not going to be drawn into an argument about whether the parties of the late lamented Labour Government were better than those of the Conservative Government. We have heard enough from the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) about the record of the last Labour Government as compared with that of the Conservative Government.

I want to talk about the way in which Wales is governed as it would appear to an outside observer. For the purposes of discussion, let us imagine a European country—an ancient nation with a population of 3 million that is about the same size as one of the Baltic states. That nation is governed——

Mr. Morgan: I have heard this speech before.

Dr. Thomas: Well, it has not been in *Hansard* before. The hon. Gentleman might have read it in the *Western Mail*.

Mr. Morgan: It is a good speech—I like it more every time I hear it.

Dr. Thomas: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman follows my speeches. It will do him no harm to listen to it again.

That nation of 3 million people is governed by a party with less than 20 per cent. support in the opinion polls in that state. It has three Ministers. They are not area Ministers. One of the Ministers crosses the border when he visits, but the other two Ministers are very much part of the culture of that country. That has always been the case with colonial systems. In addition to those three Ministers, there is a budget of £4 billion, which is spent by central Government. There are also 3,000 civil servants working in that system, who commute between the two capitals on a fast train——

Dr. Kim Howells: Not so fast some days.

Dr. Thomas: All right, not so fast some days. Perhaps Labour Members will stop interrupting me.

Civil servants also occasionally appear on a video screen so that they can speak to each other without having to travel up and down. Occasionally they make forays to the northern part of the territory. Indeed, one of them, who lives there, makes forays into the Ministries and Civil Service every week.

[Dr. Thomas]

That is how Wales is governed. If one were to look at that from outside, one would say, "Good heavens, this nation needs perestroika and glasnost. This place needs democracy. How is it that the people put up with this kind of government?" The answer is quite simply that Wales operates within the context of a unitary state of the United Kingdom which has been centralised, with most of its activity in the metropolitan centre. Except for the North of Ireland, where there was an elected assembly for a period, and Scotland, where there is a similar system to that in Wales, only the people of that unitary state have had to put up with the system of having the day-to-day affairs of all the nationalities, ethnic groups and regions within the state run from the centre.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman talked about the formal structure in the Welsh Office as governing Wales. Did he know that, within six months of taking office, the Secretary of State gave an answer to a question that I submitted, saying that he had made 300 appointments to public bodies in Wales in six months?

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful for that intervention because I missed that part of my script. Not only do we have the Ministers and elected Members of this Chamber, but we have a sort of intermediate Government whereby the Secretary of State appoints public bodies. I think that there have been 600 direct appointments to quangos and 1,200 advisory bodies in which the Welsh Office is consulted. I shall not read out the list or we shall be here all night, and all our daffodils will wilt.

We have had a unitary state in the United Kingdom, but that is becoming an increasingly outdated model. Throughout central and western Europe and in the Soviet Union, federalism is becoming the major issue in politics. For how long will the United Kingdom be the exception to that system? How long will Wales be the exception to a system that is generally spreading throughout Europe? I see the future in terms of increasing the lateral links, of which the Secretary of State spoke this afternoon. I see it in terms of economic and political relationships between regions and nations on a lateral basis throughout Europe.

The people of Wales, the business community and those in the trade union movement in Wales must look carefully to the way in which having an elected, political, small nation of regional governments is a major enterprising aspect in itself. One thing that the Secretary of State has discovered since he became the Prime Minister of Wales —having failed to become the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom he has become a surrogate Prime Minister of Wales, and I am pleased that he is meeting the Prime Minister of Baden-Wurttemberg and whoever else he wishes to meet on state visits—is that within that system, having a political relationship laterally between regions and smaller nations is an important economic development. The way in which the Welsh Office is pursuing its policy, not just in western Europe within the Community, but in regions in Japan and the Soviet Union, such as the Ukraine, shows how Welsh Office economic and political thinking should progress.

The Welsh people are gaining a new self-confidence. The argument is not merely about whether we swap manufacturing for service jobs and whether we still have poverty. Whenever there is serious economic disfunction and disjunction, there is poverty. Wealth is created, but so is more poverty. Therefore, it should not surprise us that low pay still exists as a major problem alongside the high and intermediate technology that has come in. Economic disjunction takes place when there is further growth.

We should look at the overall impression that Wales creates for itself and gives to others. I am not entirely influenced by the propaganda sheet of the Welsh Office, otherwise known as the *Western Mail*. However, that newspaper tends to print more good stories about what is happening. I do not blame the editor for doing that because he has editorial freedom to do so and we welcome good news.

Mr. Morgan: And he has a grant from the Welsh Office.

Dr. Thomas: Yes, he had a grant from the Welsh Office. We have all had grants from the Welsh Office at one time or another.

Welsh consciousness of itself, and the Welsh people's consciousness of themselves as an enterprising nation, has, ironically, changed in recent years. The growth of the media industry is one good example of that. That optimism is also catching on culturally, in terms of our English language culture, in our valley communities and in terms of the Welsh language culture.

This is my final point because I want to make sure that all my Labour colleagues speak because I am a kind and generous boy. After 16 years in this place, today I am still kind and generous. Having said that, I hope that I get a quango if Labour is ever in government.

Mr. Morgan: The Welsh String Bean and Leek Marketing Board?

Dr. Thomas: What would I like? I shall draw up a list for the hon. Gentleman.

The optimism, which is part of the enterprise culture, is also a cultural optimism with regard to the Welsh language community. I was pleased to see that Professor Harold Carter had got his figures right at last. He has been making a bit of an industry recently out of predicting when, and whether, the Welsh language would finally die.

I am pleased to end by quoting from the greatest book of Welsh history ever written, which is published today. It is called "Hanes Cymru" and is by Dr. John Davies. In the penultimate paragraph he lists all the people throughout the history of Wales who predicted the end of the nation. I shall not go as far back as Tacitus in 100 AD because it would detain the House and would be tedious repetition. I can say that Rhygyfarch, who was reputed to be the author of the "Life of St. David", round about 1094, considered the early extinction of his people. In 1247 it was predicted that the whole of Wales had been drawn down. In 1282 it was predicted the whole of Wales had been struck down. The scholars of the renaissance period believed that the identity of the Welsh was on its way out. In 1682, William Richards said that the Welsh language was about to die. In 1688 Thomas Jones was afraid that the Welsh would be removed from history. The majority of Welsh leaders in the last century did not think that Welsh would continue much beyond that century. The "Welsh Outlook" in 1916 stated that the Welsh language would cease to be a living language by 1950. And yet, says Dr. John Davies:

"Eto, fe oroesodd y Cymry holl argyfyngau eu hanes, gan ailgreu eu cenedl drosodd a thro".

The Welsh people managed to overcome all the crises of their history and recreated their nation over and over again.

My prediction on this St. David's day is that in the 21st century the Welsh nation will be recreated as a building block of a federal Europe and I hope to see the Minister of State, Welsh Office still with us to celebrate that occasion.

8.27 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): It gives me great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). He started by saying that one should stand back and look at Wales and see how it is evolving. When I first moved to Wales just under 20 years ago, I lived in Pembrokeshire. The economy was, to some extent, as it is today in terms of low wages. But it was also dominated by three industries: agriculture, steel and coal. Two of them have undergone substantial changes, but the Wales that I see now when I visit it reasonably regularly —because I represent a constituency just across the Severn —has also undergone substantial changes over that period.

The coal and steel industries have been dramatically slimmed down. The Secretary of State said that they had shed 58,000 jobs in the past few years. In the process of evolution, the Welsh economy is on a much broader base now. Previously it was accepted that unemployment in Wales would be about one third above the United Kingdom national average.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am wondering who makes the selection of speakers. I submitted my name to speak. I represent the constituency of Rhondda, and considering that I have the largest majority in Wales and in the United Kingdom, I should have thought that I should be called to speak in a Welsh debate. Yet the hon. Gentleman——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member will be aware that this is the United Kingdom Parliament. Any person democratically elected to it has a perfect right to speak in any debate.

Mr. Hayward: When I moved to Wales, the economy was dominated by three major industries. The economic base has since been broadened dramatically. At that time unemployment was about one third higher than the United Kingdom national average. Because the Welsh economy now extends to a wide range of industries, unemployment is about 17 per cent. above the national average. I hope that it will come down to, and possibly be lower than, that average. I believe that that is achievable because we have on either side of the River Severn economies that are evolving together. Indeed, we are to a large extent becoming mutually dependent.

Mr. Rogers: Oh dear.

Mr. Hayward: If the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will listen to me, he will recognise that there is a mutual development of the two economies. I have no desire, as the two sides of the Severn grow together, to see the diminution of the Welsh nation. It is important that the Welsh identity should remain. At the same time, local authorities and agencies in Wales should look across the River Severn and recognise that there is a mutual interest.

That interest is growing, not only in the broadening base of the economy on both sides but in other matters, for example, the development of a second Severn bridge. Although some may not regard it as a happy event, there is increased house purchasing and commuting with people obtaining jobs in Cardiff and moving to Bristol, and vice-versa.

It is important for organisations responsible for Avon and Gloucestershire on one side and for the Welsh economy on the other not to look at one area in isolation. To do so would be to the detriment of the area. For the sake of everybody, we must look at both sides. A good example of that is the issue that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) raised when she first entered the House, that of Rhoose airport and its possible expansion. At present we have two airports which almost consider that they are competing against each other, although to a large extent they supply a common population. We should try to attain a sense of community so that both sides of the economy can grow together.

I have spoken briefly because I am anxious that other hon. Members should take part in the debate. It is important to recognise the potential for growth on both sides. There is a mutuality of interests and it is in the long-term interest of both sides that we should recognise that.

8.33 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): I add my sympathy to that expressed by other hon. Members for the people who have been affected by the flooding in Towyn. It has been a dreadful occurrence. As one who represents part of Colwyn, I hope that the after-effects of the flooding will not manifest themselves in increased poll tax for the residents of Colwyn who are unaffected by it.

As many of my hon. Friends said, the poll tax is not fair. Even the Duke of Westminster, the richest man in Britain, acknowledges that. For the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) to trot out the old chestnut about the old lady living in a house by herself paying enormous rates to a council that is overspending is an utter fabrication produced by Conservative Central Office, and even there the story is getting low priority now.

When such an old lady lived in a large house by herself, under the old system, she could, if she was poor, claim rate rebate. In any event, she had a choice, which is not available to poll tax payers. Under the poll tax system, even those on the lowest incomes must pay 20 per cent., and they have no choice but to pay or to go to court.

Nor will poll tax make local government more accountable, despite what the hon. Member for Pembroke claimed. If the hon. Gentleman is anxious to ensure that Dyfed's poll tax is the lowest, he cannot at the same time claim that Dyfed county council is overspending and will be accountable to the local electorate. If that were the case, the electors would think, rightly, that they should continue voting for those in power to achieve a low poll tax. The two factors are mutually exclusive.

We must consider the effect of that bit of the rates which has not disappeared and to which reference has not been made. I refer to the uniform business rate. That system is still based on the old unfair system of rates, and it is 2p higher in Wales than in England. That has led my local chambers of trade to complain bitterly to me about the effect that that will have on small businesses in Wales.

[Mr. Martyn Jones]

Add to that the VAT on electricity and the phenomenally high interest rates, which are likely to rise even further, and we have a disaster on our hands in towns such as Llangollen in my constituency, which relies on small businesses.

People are also worried about job losses. We have heard much about the way in which the number of jobs in Wales is increasing. That does not seem to be happening in rural areas. On several occasions I have tabled written questions asking the Secretary of State to provide figures of unemployment in rural Wales. Not only has he not provided them, but it seems that he is not even thinking about ways to obtain them. The Rural Development Commission in England is able to provide such figures. If we had them for Wales, they would show up what is happening in our rural areas.

Mr. Livsey: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one cannot obtain statistics about wage levels in rural Wales? I have been unable to obtain from the Welsh Office such statistics for Powys. That has concerned me for some time. The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) said that wages in Dyfed were the lowest, but I suspect that they may be even lower in Powys. Unfortunately, we cannot obtain the information.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point, which demonstrates that without adequate statistics it is difficult to get a complete picture. It seems that certain statistics are unavailable or that no one is anxious to gather them.

Jobs in rural areas are a problem and I welcome the proposals of the Welsh Development Agency to examine the situation in Denbigh and Corwen in my constituency. They are black spots and I welcome the WDA's efforts. There is a particular problem in Denbigh, where the factory of James Seddon is likely to close with 125 job losses. That closure is due to problems in the clothing industry, mainly because of high interest rates on the investment that has been made in that industry.

Such jobs as exist are poorly paid, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) pointed out. I agree with him that the figures are not available, but some figures have just become available for Clwyd. They are based on the decency threshold figures issued by the Council of Europe, and for my area the decency threshold wage is £160 a week.

In Clwyd, East, the part of Clwyd about which Conservative Members brag in relation to numbers of jobs and development investment, 29 per cent. of people in full-time employment earn less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold. In Clwyd, West, the rural area that has been neglected, 38·5 per cent. earn less than that threshold.

Agriculture is also going through the problems of high interest rates and VAT on electricity—problems that will affect it as much as they will small businesses. We also have the problem of the Welsh Office Agriculture Department —I know that other hon. Members are concerned about it —which provides a service not only for Clwyd but for the eastern parts of Gwynedd and the northern parts of Montgomery. The Department is being shrunk by 35 members of staff and will give a much worse service.

Then there is the problem of roads. We were told in the Welsh Grand Committee that the A55 would be the answer to all the problems of north Wales, which is nonsense. There are no connections from the A55 to my area, and even if there were they would not be used without proper investment and some sort of development area status for the rural areas.

Furthermore, we have no more deregulated buses and very few post offices. Even magistrates courts are closing in my area of Llangollen. I submit that the toxic waste dumps that seem to proliferate in my patch and in others are no substitute for the jobs that we need.

Hon. Members will have noted the host of golden daffodils being worn by Opposition Members today—we have rather more Welsh Members than do the Conservatives. Even if all the Conservative Welsh Members wore their golden daffodils they would not amount to a host, and they certainly will not after the next election.

8.42 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I want to take the opportunity of this St. David's day debate to raise in some detail a serious issue affecting the Health Service in Wales. I have raised it already in early-day motions 407 and 540 and in some written and oral questions. I refer to the dangerous commercial conflicts of interest when Health Service employees are also shareholders and directors of private companies, operating in sectors in which there are opportunities for income generation in the Health Service.

I want to make it quite clear that the general right to private practice of consultants, doctors, nurses, medical laboratories, scientific officers and other NHS employees is not at stake in the two cases that have been drawn to my attention. This issue concerns a specific area of private practice in which there are opportunities for Health Service income generation. I believe, as the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Health are both aware, that the Government need to lay down clear and specific guidelines to prevent such commercial conflicts of interest.

The first case arose in my own constituency of Bridgend, at the Princess of Wales hospital. I received a letter shortly after Christmas from a doctor in west Glamorgan, drawing my attention to the fact that Dr. Joan Williams, a full-time consultant biochemist, employed by the Mid Glamorgan health authority at the Princess of Wales and East Glamorgan hospitals, and Mr. David Else, a chief medical laboratory scientific officer at the Princess of Wales hospital, had established a company, Healthcare Diagnostics Limited, in January 1989, of which they are chairman and secretary respectively, as well as being the majority shareholders with 3,249 shares apiece. The company has three other shareholding directors and a further shareholder, Dr. Rhys John, a clinical biochemist in the pathology laboratory of the University of Wales hospital in Cardiff.

On making inquiries I discovered that, during the course of 1989, at no time did Dr. Williams or Mr. Else make it generally known to their colleagues in the pathology department that they were so intimately involved in their own private pathology laboratory. I understand that when establishing this laboratory at the science park in Bridgend and applying for financial and other assistance from local government and the Welsh

Office, they claimed that the work that they would be doing would not compete with work being done in the NHS pathology laboratory.

That may have been their honest intention, but the truth is that the brochure of Healthcare Diagnostics Ltd. sets out, with prices, the tests and services offered by the company and virtually all, if not all, of these tests and services can be carried out at the NHS labs in the Princess of Wales hospital, Bridgend. These tests and services—category 2 work, screening for drug trials, cervical cancer screening and biochemistry or haemotology tests—are worth thousands of pounds annually to the Princess of Wales hospital. Either one third of the fees charged go to the hospital or 100 per cent., as in the case of screening for drug trials.

The potential conflict of interest, which could so easily be tantamount to commercial espionage, is, I hope, clear for all to see. Dr. Williams and Mr. Else are senior personnel in the pathology department and have access to privileged information on the customers and charges of the NHS pathology department, while at the same time they are directors and shareholders of a potential competitor to the NHS pathology department.

In private industry such a situation would not be tolerated. Apart from specific contractual obligations which often extend years after retirement to prevent staff from working for competitors, there was also a case—Hivac *v.* Park Royal Scientific Instruments Company—which established that, in the absence of any contractual term, an employee may not work for a competitor in his spare time. In that case an injunction was granted against a competitor, restraining him from employing the plaintiff's employees who were making valves for him in their spare time.

Additionally, I believe that Dr. Joan Williams has broken her contract with the health authority. In DHSS circular PM(79) 11 of November 1979, in the section entitled

"Whole Time Contract, a) Private Practice,"

the second sentence in paragraph 7 reads:

"The representatives of the professions have accepted that this extended right to private practice should not be exercised in such a way as to damage working relationships with other NHS staffs".

I believe that this has happened and that Mid Glamorgan health authority should interview all its pathology department staff, guaranteeing them privacy and anonymity, for their views. Such an inquiry would reveal the concern of many of the staff at all levels about the role of Dr. Joan Williams and Mr. David Else in Healthcare Diagnostics Ltd.

I further discovered to my amazement that those two were not only content to establish this company quietly but had the audacity to use, without permission, photographs of equipment taken by health authority staff in the Princess of Wales hospital pathology laboratory in the brochure publicising their services. Although this is essentially a side issue, I believe that it further underlines the misrepresentation, secretiveness and underhandedness of Dr. Williams and Mr. Else in promoting activities which endanger the wide-ranging and efficient services provided for the public good by the pathology department of the Princess of Wales hospital, Bridgend.

Following the publication of my early-day motion 407 on Dr. Joan Williams, Mr. David Else and Healthcare Diagnostics Ltd., which appeared on the Order Paper on 31 January 1990, I received four anonymous written submissions concerning a similar situation in Cardiff, involving Dr. Keith Davies, Dr. Stephanie Matthews and Lifecare Advanced Medical Ltd. I can do no better than to read the three submissions into the record, with the deletion of information which could possibly help to identify my anonymous informants:

"Dear Mr. Griffiths,

I am writing to you as a consequence of reading a report in the South Wales Echo on 31 January in which it was stated that you had called for the resignation of senior biochemistry staff at Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend, accusing them of 'misrepresentation, secretiveness and underhandedness'.

We have a situation in our department where the lab manager, Dr. Keith Davies, a top grade Biochemist, is also a director of 'Lifecare Advanced Medical' a company which provides private health checks. Dr. Davies has the main responsibility for generating secondary income for the department (e.g. drug trials). In the past this has amounted to thousands of pounds a year. Lifecare has the equipment to do much of this work, so that Dr. Davies is now in the position of being able to tender for work for either his own private lab. or for the NHS lab. There is some evidence emerging, two years after the setting up of Lifecare, that the health service is coming a poor second.

Dr. Davies spends very little time in the department, has used the supplies system at the hospital to order equipment for Lifecare and, after interviewing for a MLSO post in the hospital, has telephoned the successful applicant and offered her a job at Lifecare (which was accepted). It is also true that the work done by our department for the Clinical Trials Unit, Pharmacology Dept. U.H.W., was taken from the department and was done for a time by Lifecare. Dr. Davies was at least partly responsible for setting the charges made by the department for this work.

Although Dr. Davies was given approval to set up the company by the District General Manager, Mr. Gordon Harrhy, it was never sanctioned by the D.H.A. and is viewed by virtually the whole department with a mixture of anger and amazement that he should be allowed to hold two jobs involving such glaring conflicts of interest and offering, as they do, such potential for the gain of Lifecare at the expense of the health service."

The second letter said:

"I was most pleased to hear the Early day Motion by Mr. Win Griffiths on Wednesday, 31 January 1990. You may well be aware that a similar situation exists in South Glamorgan, where a company known as Lifecare Advanced Medical was set up by two employees of South Glamorgan Area Health Authority about two years ago.

Over the last couple of years I have become more and more amazed at the conduct of this company and in particular one of its directors, Dr. K. W. Davies. Dr. Davies is Top Grade Biochemist in Medical Biochemistry, U.H.W. and as such has been responsible for setting charges for private work carried out within the department. He is employed on a full time contract. Two years into the existence of Lifecare several points should now be made:

1. Very few of Dr. Davies' contracted hours are actually spent within the department. Some of the 'lost' time could of course be spent on other Health Service business.
2. The supplies system at U.H.W. has been used to take delivery of an air conditioning unit for Lifecare. One would presume this was also ordered through the hospital ordering system.
3. A potential employee of Medical Biochemistry was approached by Dr. Davies after being offered a post. She is now working for Lifecare. Dr. Davies was a member of the interviewing panel which agreed to offer her the Health Service post.
4. Work performed for the Clinical Trials unit U.H.W. by Medical Biochemistry and generated up to £100 a day for the laboratory ceased soon after the opening of Lifecare. This work was then performed for a period of time by Lifecare. Dr. Davies was, at least in part, responsible for the setting of charges by our laboratory to the Clinical Trials unit.

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

I believe that income generation from private work has become an unpleasant necessity and that we should be able to compete for this work fairly. This is obviously impossible when our own senior management have a vested interest in ensuring that this work is performed by their own private companies."

The third submission is:

"Name of Company: LIFECARE ADVANCED MEDICAL

Address: Cardiff Business Centre
Senghennydd Road
Cathays
Cardiff CF2 4AY
Tel. 0222 372311

Directors: Dr. Keith Davies
Top Grade Biochemist
Department of Medical Biochemistry
U.H.W.

Dr. Stephanie Matthews
Consultant Pathologist
Llandough Hospital

Dr. Anthony Campbell
Reader in Medical Biochemistry
Welsh National School of Medicine
University of Wales College of Medicine."

I found out that there is a fourth director, Dr. Anthony Berlyn Davies of 17a South road, Sully, South Glamorgan. The letter continues:

"The private laboratory is to be part of a 'well person' centre, where it is possible to walk in and have a health check (ie BP, Hb., Cholesterol etc.) The equipment includes a Technicon RA500 analyser and a Coulter. As far as I can gather, Gordon Harrhy, the District General Manager, has given the go ahead but there has not been any official sanction from the Health Authority.

My head of department, Prof. Elder, called a meeting of chief and senior MLSOs and informed us that we were not to process any samples for this laboratory and suggested that there may be direct competition for work between the laboratory and NHS laboratories in the future. He also pointed out that at present our 'secondary income' which is generated from private sources (eg drug trials) makes an important contribution towards the Departmental staffing budget and there will be competition for this work.

Keith Davies, as our departmental manager, is often responsible for obtaining this work for Medical Biochemistry, UHW. He has now put himself in the position of being able to tender for work for either his own laboratory or the NHS laboratory. I would assume that Dr. Matthews is in a similar position at Llandough. I know that, in the first instance, any 'drug trial' work is to come from sources which do not wish to use NHS laboratories, but it does not take too much imagination to see the eventual situation.

At this time everything is 'above board'—apparently! But many of the laboratory staff at UHW are suspicious because of the conflict of interest that these NHS laboratory managers have. We await the time when these people are compromised.

He and Dr. Matthews attempted to process a large number of samples, taken from a group of medical students, for full biochemical profiles to 'establish reference ranges'. Prof. Elder allowed only the cholesterols to be measured as that was apparently part of a lecture which Dr. Matthews had given to the students."

The fourth letter states:

"Dear Mr. Griffiths,

May I applaud you making public the activities of Drs. Davies and Matthews in South Glamorgan H.A. It is my hope the ensuing enquiry will reveal the truth with regard to their misuse of their positions.

Regretfully, it appears the general manager, Mr. Gordon Harrhy, is more concerned with the source of your information, rather than its accuracy, and I fear a 'cover-up' will take place. Some of the questions the enquiry should ask are:

Why does Lifecare use equipment from the same manufacturers as the U.H.W. laboratory?

Where do Lifecare's consumables come from?

Why does Mr. Davies pay frequent visits to the U.H.W. laboratory reagent store room?

Why is Dr. Davies frequently at Lifecare during working hours?

Another matter of concern is that of the Pathology budget. At a recent presentation, Mr. Harrhy stated that the 'overspend' of half a million pounds by Pathology will be cut from next year's Pathology budget. This and the loss of many profitable contracts by S. Glam. N.H.S. laboratories (presumably to Lifecare), have given staff the feeling a 'carve-up' of Pathology is taking place.

Is Mr. Harrhy deliberately running the service down to such a level it will be unable to meet an ever-increasing N.H.S. demand? Certainly the way the regrading of M.L.S.O. staff has been handled in S.Glam., little has been done by management to try and retain staff. Presumably when the N.H.S. Pathology Service fails, Mr. Harrhy will then have no option but to go to private tender, (probably to Lifecare!?).

I would like to be able to sign this letter, but given the 'macho' and vengeful management in S.Glam., I regret I cannot.

In any event, I thank you for your efforts."

Those four submissions make it absolutely clear that staff in the University of Wales hospital medical biochemistry department are deeply aware of and gravely concerned about the conflict of interest which exists between the NHS work of Dr. Davies and Dr. Matthews and their private pathology laboratories, of which they are company chairman and secretary respectively. This, indeed, is the insiduous part of the operation. They have a very direct personal interest in attracting work to their own private laboratory, while at the same time they are involved in either getting work for the NHS laboratories in which they are employed or setting charges for that work. All that is against the background of their access to privileged information in their role as senior staff members in the NHS laboratories.

I believe that South Glamorgan health authority needs to investigate the allegations rigorously. Some questions and lines of inquiry present themselves very obviously. How did an air conditioning unit destined for Lifecare Advanced Medical Ltd. of the Cardiff business centre, Senghennydd Road, Cathays, Cardiff, get delivered to the University of Wales hospital, The Heath, Cardiff? Can Lifecare Advanced Medical Ltd. produce its original paperwork to show that this was all a grotesque mistake, or did it indeed use the hospital's supplies system to order its equipment?

With regard to the person interviewed for the MLSO's job in the hospital, who was afterwards offered, and accepted, a job at Lifecare Advanced Medical Ltd. by Dr. Davies—who was on the hospital's interview panel—inquiries could be made about the advertisement of the Lifecare Advanced Medical job, when the interviews for it took place, who the other people on the shortlist were, and what paperwork exists in connection with all of this activity.

Finally, as to the loss of work carried out for the clinical trials unit, senior staff in the medical biochemistry department should be able to provide all the answers. It is a tragedy that Dr. Joan Williams, Dr. Stephanie Matthews, Dr. Keith Davies and Mr. David Else do not seem to be able to see the difference between, on the one hand, going to a private pathology laboratory, and being paid to carry out tests on behalf of the laboratory owners who have attracted this work, and, on the other hand, being directly involved in attracting work to their own

private pathology laboratories while having a similar role in getting work for the NHS laboratories in which they are employed.

This commercial conflict of interests will become even more stark and intense when health authorities are able to go out to tender for this work. How can NHS staff with responsibilities for setting the NHS pathology laboratory charges, or with access to the information on which the tender is based, have the same responsibilities as shareholders and directors of a company making its own tender for the same health authority work? Unfortunately, this malaise has first come to light in Wales—the home of the builders of the NHS. I hope that by publicising these pernicious activities we shall stop their potential damage to the NHS in its tracks, that Dr. Williams, Dr. Matthews, Dr. Davies and Mr. Else will resign either from the NHS or from their private companies, and that the Secretary of State for Wales, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Health, will issue clear and specific guidelines to ensure that the dangers of conflict of interest and commercial espionage do not blight the NHS and working relationships within it.

9 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): It is exactly a year, Madam Deputy Speaker, since you were kind enough to call me for the first time, on my first day in this House. I thank you belatedly.

I want to address the House on what is, perhaps, a very different note from the kind of song that we have heard so far tonight, serious though it has been. I want to draw attention to the transformation of the Welsh economy and to draw out of that transformation something that may be of interest to some hon. Members, and about which I feel particularly strongly. Over the past five years a curious feature of employment patterns in Wales is that the number of people employed in non-print media has been greater than the number employed in the coal mines of the Principality. Indeed, Cardiff has boasted of being "media city".

Mr. Morgan: Seedier city.

Dr. Howells: Seedier, perhaps, but certainly "media city". In addition, we have media villages in places like Caernarfon and Carmarthen. The transformation has been welcomed by many as evidence of the security of Wales's position on the frontiers of the new communications industries—the new technological industries that are transforming the economy of the world. To many members of the general public, though not necessarily to the people in the industry itself, the television industry in Wales may appear to be a glamorous occupation and, moreover, one which, in Wales at least, is run by a rather select troupe of cultured, educated individuals, who, as often as not, are related to each other, and who celebrate that relationship very often by adding one or two barrels to their surnames.

Still, Wales is a small country, and it is to be expected that a television director's son or a producer's nephew should be found employment in the creative corridors of BBC Wales or HTV or S4C. After all, that was so often the way in which miners' sons were found employment on the nearest stall or heading on the coal face. It is refreshing to discover that this quaint old Welsh custom has not disappeared and that the cultured, educated little group that I have mentioned is looking after its own, especially during this age of transformation and uncertainty.

It will be interesting, for example, to see who replaces the controller of programmes at the BBC, Mr. Gareth Price, who has announced that he will be leaving his post to take up a new challenge elsewhere. I wish Mr. Price well. I hope that his successor will be chosen strictly on the basis of his or her professional television talents, and not on the basis of certain of the traditional criteria, which have so often loomed large in the making of such decisions. I refer to criteria such as having an uncle or aunt, or a brother or sister, or a son or daughter already performing somewhere in the troupe. By the way, I hope also that the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson will not be appointed. He seems to have been taking up every job going vacant.

I hope that, whoever is chosen, his or her perspective will be coloured at least as much by a desire to fight for more English language programmes to be made in Wales for a Welsh audience so as to protect the status quo, which unkinder critics have denounced as reflecting more than anything else the broadcasters' own linguistic bias.

The House decided some time ago that the Welsh language would benefit from the existence of a television station that would broadcast entirely through the medium of Welsh, and it created the foundations of S4C. That station has done sterling work and, deservedly, has received from the public purse the money it has needed to fund an entire range of television programmes. I believe that it has earned for Wales a reputation abroad as a nation which takes seriously the task of addressing Wales creatively. I am glad that the Broadcasting Bill seems not to threaten that good work. I am glad, too, that S4C's funding will not be threatened either now or in the foreseeable future.

I am much less sanguine about the other side of the Welsh cultural equation. Over 80 per cent. of the population of Wales does not speak Welsh. I understand that annual spending by BBC Wales and HTV on English language programmes in Wales is between £15 million and £20 million compared with about £65 million that is spent on Welsh language programmes. I wrote to the Minister of State, Home Office with responsibilities for broadcasting about this anomaly. He replied, "What are you whingeing about?", although he expressed himself in more parliamentary language. "After all", he wrote, "English speakers in Wales have the opportunity to tune to the same national channels as the rest of us. What more could you want?" I should be most grateful if the Secretary of State would inform the Minister that English-speaking viewers in Wales need more sustenance than the thin gruel of "Neighbours", "Wogan" and "That's Life", which is brewed in Shepherds Bush and down in Sydney.

There should not be two standards applied to the expression of culture by the medium of television in Wales. Soaps—I have mentioned one that I loathe especially—are, heaven help us, but I have been informed of this, a means of celebrating our identity and existence. If that is so, how can Welsh speakers through S4C witness each week four or five soaps made in Wales for Welsh viewers while English speakers can witness not one made in Wales for Wales? Where are the English language equivalents of the excellent news and documentary programmes that are made day after day in Welsh for S4C?

Good luck to the Welsh language speakers. They have conducted a highly successful political propaganda

[Dr. Howells]

campaign, which has enabled them to enjoy their present status, or the present status of S4C. I want them to continue to enjoy it, and there must be no threat to funding. But what of the rest of us? What of the cultural prospects and priorities of those appointed to head our English language broadcasting services in Wales? Will they continue to remain as silent as generally they have been until now for more funds for programme making and for greater access to prime-time broadcasting slots of existing channels? Perhaps they could even speak up for a new English language channel.

Will we continue to suffer the results of the silent acquiescence to the status quo that will allow the cultural identity of 2,300,000 non-Welsh speakers in Wales to be perceived, interpreted and fed back to Wales by the broadcasting gurus of the metropolis? Are we to continue to witness an erosion of the number of English language programme makers and their facilities in Wales to the point where we shall no longer be able to mount the excellent series which emerge just occasionally from Cardiff? Is that expertise to dwindle away while Ministers whistle about the joys of the Welsh language programme-making capacity as if Wales needed no other capacity?

It seems that a modern people with industries that, as the Secretary of State has told us so often, are at the frontiers of contemporary technology need the means of defining themselves culturally and of developing and expressing their creativity and aspirations. In Wales, only a minority are able to do that through the medium of television. It is time that the majority also enjoyed that access. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider carefully the need to ensure this provision when he next surveys the plans for appointments and redundancies in Welsh broadcasting.

9.8 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) will forgive me if I do not follow him by saying that he has a good idea, because I must declare an interest as a former employee of the BBC in Wales. It would be invidious of me, as a Welsh speaker, to comment too much on what he said, except to say that one of the best experiements recently carried out in Britain was carried out by the BBC in my constituency. We had a closed service community television programme for an entire week. It was an excellent experiment, which was entirely in the English language, and was much applauded by people in my constituency, who hoped that it would continue. However, sadly, the BBC did not have the money to continue the experiment, and I think that that is a great pity. Many of the valley communities, in particular, in south Wales would benefit from such programmes in the future.

I did not think that I would start my speech in a St. David's day debate here by congratulating Tory councils. However, I think that it is in order to congratulate, in particular, the councillors in West Oxfordshire who have deserted the Tory party as a protest againt the harshest, the most regressive and unfair tax to be imposed for almost 400 years in this country's history. It surely must be an example that many Tory councillors up and down the country, and particularly in Wales, will be eager to follow. Many local Tory councillors are scared stiff at the thought of having to face the electors at the ballot box in May.

When I listened to the hectoring tone of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), I realised that he obviously does not understand that Tory supporters do not share his apparent enthusiasm for the poll tax. The worrying message for Tory Members of Parliament in marginal seats throughout Wales, according to the latest opinion poll, is that more than one half of their traditional voters believe that the new system will leave them worse off financially.

The Health Service and the poll tax are far and away the two main issues worrying Welsh voters. Of course, the poll tax has been the Prime Minister's own personal crusade. She has described it as the flagship of her Government. Apparently, it was the idea of the present Conservative party chairman—back in the far-off days when he was Secretary of State for the Environment—and he is now engaged in a desperate bid to lay the blame elsewhere. The chairman of the Tory party is today urging all Tory constituency agents and chairmen to go out and campaign hard. He is urging them to use a "strong and positive message". I put it to them that the strongest, the most positive message that they could give in Wales today is for Tory councillors to follow the example of the West Oxfordshire councillors.

The eight county councils in Wales have repeatedly told the Secretary of State that he has got his figures wrong, and that they have got theirs right. The financial adviser to the Welsh Counties Committee said:

> "We have consistently made the point to the Welsh Office that their expectations fell 3 to 4 per cent. below what was needed to reflect pay and price increases. The sums now being levied bear out what we have been saying all through the last months of last year."

He went on to criticise the Secretary of State for Wales for basing the expected poll tax levels on an impossibility—the 100 per cent. collection of the tax. We all know that treasurers expect to collect no more than 95 to 96 per cent. of the amount levied—a significant increase in missing cash—compared with the 99 per cent. or more collected through the present rating system.

The Government's figures are also off target because Ministers have assumed that council spending will rise by only 3·8 per cent., but everyone knows that inflation is nearer 8 per cent. That is apparent to everybody, apart from the Government. The Government's figures are even more unreal in the light of the pay award to the teachers of 7·9 per cent. The Government have reduced even further the proportion of council spending financed by the Government; even under their own underestimate, grants from Whitehall will cover only 38·6 per cent. of council spending, compared with 43 per cent. last year.

The Secretary of State also chooses to ignore the fact that the Government's policies are costing councils extra money. He tells councils to get on with implementing the national curriculum, their new responsibilities for clearing up litter and the collection of the poll tax itself without giving them the extra cash. In Cynon Valley, one of the poorest district councils in Wales, it will cost £300,000 to administer and collect the poll tax.

The Conservative party has made an incredible mess of introducing the poll tax—after its best brains have been exercised during the past years in producing three Green Papers, and two Acts of Parliament and while five

Secretaries of State for the Environment have been exhausted in trying to stitch up this unjust and unworkable system of local taxation.

Whatever the Secretary of State for Wales and the Prime Minister say, there is no escape from the truth that wealth is being transferred in communities such as the Cynon Valley away from those who have least to those who have most. There are few Tory fat cats in the Cynon Valley, but the few that there are will be paying 23 per cent. less in poll tax compared with the household of four living in a terrace house who will pay 480 per cent. more. .

The average poll tax in Wales will be at least £220—25 per cent. above what the Government and the Secretary of State said that it would be. As the Committee of Welsh District Councils has told the Secretary of State, the Government have substantially underprovided for inflation, statutory charges and other demands on council services. Despite the excellent record of Welsh local government in keeping annual spending growth close to the Government's target year after year, the Secretary of State threatens the councils with penalties unless they obey him. He ignores, as always, the reality that higher social and economic deprivation demands additional resources. It is the Government and not the local councils who are to blame for high levels of poll tax.

In the Cynon Valley 60 per cent. of those at work live in households with incomes of £4,000 a year or less. By any measure, that is poverty in Britain today. What will the poll tax mean to them? Take, for example, a family of four consisting of a grandmother, a father, a mother and a student son living on one wage in a terraced house in Mountain Ash. The rates that they pay now are £217 per year. When the full rate of poll tax is brought in they will have to pay £868 per year, an increase of £651 per year, compared with the Government's estimate of £692. Even with transitional relief, which is to be phased out over three years, that same family will have to pay £748 this year.

Compare that with the billionaire Duke of Westminster who will pay a personal poll tax of £417 per year instead of his present rates bill of £10,245. The Duke is so embarrassed that he is giving the money that he saves to his tenants on the Eaton Hall estate. The Duke, who is said to be worth £3 billion and earns £3,000 an hour, plans to hand over to them his poll tax savings. The Duke, of course, is president of the Chester Conservative association.

But the Prime Minister continues to insist, without the charm of Edith Piaf, that she has no regrets about imposing the tax. She said on television that several widows living alone have thanked her. How many more are not thanking the Prime Minister? They include at least 18 Tory councillors in West Oxfordshire, innumerable Tory councillors standing for election in May and those Tory Members who have expressed concern about this terrible tax.

The Labour party continually warned that the poll tax posed a threat to civil liberties, but the rebate application form produced by Tory-controlled Plymouth city council exceeds our worst fears. One question on the form asks:

"If you share a bedroom, state with whom you share it."

Conservative-controlled Wellingborough council in Northamptonshire is running a competition for prompt payers of the poll tax. Prizes include a Ford Escort and an overseas holiday. It is one thing running a raffle to persuade people to buy a newspaper or to support a charity, but it shows what a mad concept the poll tax is if councils have to offer prizes to persuade people to pay it.

9.20 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): May I apologise to the House and to Wales for not wearing a daffodil tonight? As I am a severe asthmatic, the pollen being too close to my nose makes it impossible for me to do so. If I were ex-president Gerald Ford, people would say that I could not speak and wear a daffodil at the same time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said that he would sing a different song from my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). I do not want to sing a song, but I understand that, at 2.15 pm, evidence was given in song, which was appropriate on St. David's day, to the Committee considering the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. Dave Burns, the lead singer of "Cardiff", sang "The Grangetown Gondolier" as part of his evidence when called as an expert witness as a folk singer. That makes a change from the usual boring expert witnesses such as chartered surveyors, accountants and lawyers. He was called by one of my constituents, Sheila Llewelyn, and I think that that makes appropriate history on St. David's day.

Labour Members are not yet completely sold on the Secretary of State's vision of the new Wales. He described a country that we do not recognise. When making the speech that he makes all around the country, which I call his "Stranger in Paradise" speech, he referred to a country that is flowing with milk and honey, where unemployment is on the point of disappearing, where within a few years the only people unemployed will be clerks in the dole office, where waiting lists in hospitals do not exist but doctors are waiting to treat patients even if they so much as pass the door—and if they do not pass the door they will come and treat them for an illness that they do not have —and where our schools have new textbooks and paint on the walls.

Those who live in and represent Welsh constituencies do not recognise that country. The annual budgets of our health authorities are £7·5 million less than they reasonably demand. We know that our school system is experiencing perhaps the most severe crisis in morale for more than 10 years, and we wonder what land the Secretary of State visits, surrounded by his press officers and photographers, which so insulates him from reality that he tries to sell us his vision of a new Wales where everyone is prosperous, where everyone has a job, where everyone can get medical treatment and where the school system is such that even if one had enough money to send one's child to a private school one would be proud to send him or her to a state school. That land certainly is not Wales on this St. David's day.

Let me give the House a couple of examples. This week I received a letter from the director of education of South Glamorgan county council. It states:

"Thank you for your letter of 16 February 1990. This year, 120 teachers, including 29 Heads or Deputies, applied for early retirement. Six teachers have since withdrawn their applications and 100 have already accepted the terms. The applicants for voluntary premature retirement involve some 3-4 per cent. of the total teaching workforce. Last year 84 teachers, (some 2-3 per cent.) accepted early retirement, including 22 heads and deputies and 1985, 59 (some 1-2 per cent.) accepted, including 13 Heads or Deputies."

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

In the past five years the number of people at the top of their profession in terms of responsibility who are asking to leave early has virtually doubled. That shows a serious crisis in morale, for which we will pay, as our children and our constituents' children will not get the benefit of those experienced people.

The Under-Secretary of State, the Minister of State and, if he were here, the Secretary of State should realise what that means in South Glamorgan. I challenge the Minister who replies to the debate to tell the House, if not tonight, through his officials at a later date, the figures for the other counties in Wales. Are they also experiencing a doubling in the number of experienced teachers, including heads and deputy heads who want to leave the profession early because they have had enough?

The teachers tell me that they have had enough hassle, paper work, not being able to teach, not being able to talk to the children or the staff but having to fill in forms invented by the Government. That is the crisis in our schools that ordinary people in Wales have to attend. It is a crisis of morale when people at the top of the profession are asking to leave in droves.

Let me say a few words about the hospital service. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend spoke about some of the aspects of creeping privatisation and worse within the hospital service and the crisis that may well strike the pathology service in South Glamorgan if the £500,000 cut goes ahead. I am particularly worried about the tendency for hospitals to resort to financial measures which are the rocky road to ruin. In South Glamorgan there is a £7·5 million deficit in the financial year that starts in one month's time. It is selling a hospital to cover that revenue deficit. It is selling a capital asset not to fund a capital project but to fund a revenue deficit. How long can it continue doing that? What would the Prime Minister say if a Labour-controlled local authority attempted to do that?

In a panic, South Glamorgan has proposed that six hospitals should be closed in the coming financial year to cover a revenue deficit. That was a panic, last-minute decision. It was not planned six months ago when next year's budget was being calculated; it has all appeared in the past month. That shows that inflation is far worse than the Government admit, and they will not make good the undershoot in last year's inflation in the way that they promised, although it has proved at least 2 or 3 per cent. higher than the figures for which the Government allowed. That caused South Glamorgan to budget in a panic for the coming financial year and therefore to close next year six hospitals that it had not planned to close. That cannot work.

Finally, I wish to refer to the Secretary of State's inspiring words about bringing Mr. Spath, the Prime Minister of Baden-Wurttemberg, to Wales. I hope that the Secretary of State is well surrounded with press officers when Mr. Spath is taken around Wales. I hope that the Secretary of State does not have to tell him about industrial training in Wales. I understand that more people receive engineering apprenticeships in the state of Baden-Wurttemberg than in Great Britain. Baden-Wurttemberg has a population of only 6 million people compared with nearly 60 million in Britain, yet there are more engineering apprenticeships there than here. In Stuttgart, which has a population of only 600,000, there are many more engineering apprenticeships than in Wales, which has a population of 2·8 million. Is the Secretary of State going to tell Mr. Spath that as part of his image building for Wales to his worthy partner for Baden-Wurttemberg, the land of precision engineering in Germany?

Mr. Peter Walker: Five times as much is being spent on training now as in 1979.

Mr. Morgan: The Secretary of State may be talking about training including rehabilitative and probationary training, which was counted as just starting a job in 1979. If he is now about to tell the House that there are more apprenticeships and more recognised training leading to City and Guilds or other recognised training qualifications than there were in 1979, I shall gladly sit down and let him intervene again. Silence is sometimes golden. I hope that he will have something far more positive to say on the matter which relates to the reality of life in Wales and not to the image building in which he and the *Western Mail* indulge.

The *Western Mail* was provided with a £900,000 grant by the Welsh Office and the Secretary of State went to the wonderful opening ceremony with the editor. He has been richly rewarded for that in the pages of the *Western Mail* whenever he wants good publicity. Whenever there is bad news, such as the resignation of 18 councillors in West Oxfordshire, it is put on four lines on the side of page 1, whereas the visit by the Prince of Wales is given 6-inch-high headlines. That is his reward from the local newspaper to which he gave a grant of £900,000. We do not want to see such a Wales in the future.

9.30 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I want first to refer to the devastation in Clwyd, which has been referred to several times in the debate, partly because I grew up in a constituency there and partly because of the need for adequate aid which we have experienced in the past. Government quibbling in the early 1980s after the floods in Cardiff brought home the need for that aid to be given quickly, without reservation and without bureaucracy in the process.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) raised the wider issue of the examination of sea defences generally, and I hope that that point will be answered. Will the Minister and the Secretary of State also look at the longer-term needs of environmental research, which has been undermined in Wales in recent years? I especially commend a rethink by the Government on the excellent environmental research station in Bangor, and on the future of Research Vessel Services in Barry and the extent of environmental research in Wales as a whole.

This evening, we have had a balanced and detailed debate in which my hon. Friends have spoken with authority and detail about a series of issues. I especially commend the economic analysis of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), the detail on low pay from my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), where the figures tell a devastating story which Ministers should take seriously, and the cameo of the Tory model for the Health Service which was exposed today by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). That matter and the

way in which he raised it should be taken seriously by Ministers, and should be subjected to an independent inquiry and a public report. I call on the Minister to promise that in winding up.

The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) was unwise to intervene in a debate with a speech which demonstrated his lack of knowledge of Wales and his lack of sensitivity to the serious issues raised by Opposition Members. I should take his remarks more seriously if he were still present at this hour and if he were to demonstrate mutual support by signing the early-day motion calling on the Post Office not to downgrade the parcels service in south Wales by turning it into a branch line of a Bristol-based service, which we have often come to fear.

In this debate, Conservative Members have been foolish and foolhardy in their defence of Government policies, especially in relation to the poll tax. It has taken 15 years from the Prime Minister's promise to do away with the rates system to come up with the total mess of the poll tax. I am confident that Labour's plans for a charge based on property value with a system of rebates to look after the poor and the elderly will be fair and practical. It will improve on the old rating system and will be infinitely preferable to the poll tax.

The poll tax is the issue today. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said, this is the day on which the news has broken that 18 Conservative councillors in West Oxfordshire, who are described by the Foreign Secretary as "good Tories," have resigned. If the Secretary of State for Wales will not listen to us, to his hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West or to the Association of District Councils, will he listen to them?

The Secretary of State tried to avoid the issue today. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) rightly nailed him for his responsibility for bringing the poll tax to Wales. The Secretary of State also tried to avoid the challenge to say whether he would cap any local authority in Wales. */Interruption./* The Secretary of State would be wise to listen. He was wise, too, not to answer the question whether he would cap local authorities in Wales. I advise him to think carefully before taking that course.

As a Cardiff Member myself, I am ashamed of the way in which the city's two Conservative Members have supported the poll tax and attacked both the local council and their own electors, its ratepayers. They are both now vulnerable when the general election comes. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), in particular, appalled me when he failed to defend the council on which we have both served from an hysterical attack by the Secretary of State, and his gross caricature of the city's rate-making process repeated those distortions today. With the economic uncertainties and increased inflation —an attack on the people of Cardiff—they need more than a contingency fund.

The problems of the poll tax bear heavily on every community in Wales, but, as the Secretary of State chose to concentrate his recent vitriol on Cardiff, let me give the House the facts, confirmed not just by the political leader of that hung council but from the careful objective neutrality of the treasurer's office. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, North has not done his homework, let me tell the House why the city council's revenue spending this year is £32 million and why next year it has to be £40·6 million.

First, there is the legislation introducing the poll tax and so on, which increases the need for finance for the city council by £2·7 million. Then we have land appropriation legislation, which to begin with the Welsh Office itself did not understand, although I believe that it now does and which gives rise to an unavoidable cost of £2·1 million for the transfer of land.

In addition, we have an adjustment for inflation of £2·1 million, which includes interest and assumes an interest rate of only 7·5 per cent.—although it is higher than that at the moment as a result of the Government's abuse of our economy. Without capital from revenue of £1·8 million, there would be delays in important schemes. That is a modest figure when one realises that the capital available to the council is now grossly reduced because of the Government's cuts—£23 million down on the previous year—and the limits on the use of capital receipts that the Government have introduced. Those are the reasons for the increase, and they do not take into account extra costs in dealing with homelessness and in discharging the obligations that the Government have piled on local authorities.

Cardiff and other councils in Wales are acting modestly and realistically, and the Secretary of State for Wales should accept what we have told him for a year, what the Association of District Councils in Wales told him six months ago in Newport and what many Conservatives have told him: he got the figures wrong, and it is his mess. Instead of attacking our councils and our councillors, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North should be keeping his head down and meeting the Secretary of State for Wales to tell him of Cardiff's needs, as well as the way in which his own seat and those of the few remaining Tories in Wales will be threatened by the poll tax. He should tell him to forget poll tax capping because neither our councils nor our people deserve the chaos that would follow such an unjust decision.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael: If the hon. Gentleman wants his intervention to be taken out of the Minister's time, of course I shall give way to him.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman has referred to Cardiff. Will he say why the Committee of Welsh District Councils says that the community charge in Cardiff should be £193 and not the ridiculous, crazy figure of £253?

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman clearly has not appreciated all the facts that I have put to the House, which I now invite him to consider. */Interruption./* The Secretary of State would do better to consider them than to laugh.

The burden of the poll tax will be bad enough on its own—throughout Wales that burden will bear heavily—but it is far from being the only burden for which the Secretary of State is responsible. The list is horrifying. Improvement grants, of which the right hon. Gentleman boasted, are to be means-tested from 1 April, although he denied that the last time we debated the matter.

The uniform rate has been condemned by business men. The increase in interest rates, for which the Government are responsible, eats into people's pockets and affects their everyday lives, increasing mortgage repayments, undermining businesses, having a devastating effect on local government and increasing the prices that ordinary people have to pay. The increase in inflation caused by

[Mr. Michael]

Government policies bears down most heavily on poorer employees, especially in the public sector, who are losing as a result of the Government's decisions.

Gas and electricity charges are at or above the level of inflation and the 12·2 per cent. increase in water charges —60 per cent. above the rate of inflation—has been caused directly by the Government's policy. Investment in the water industry is needed because of the Government's neglect over the past 10 years—because they cut investment in the water industry when they came to office.

That burden of responsibility for investment is being spread away from the well-off in society to ordinary people and communities throughout Wales. I warn people in Wales and in the Chamber that that is a forerunner of a water poll tax that will be as unpopular as the poll tax, which figured so large in the debate.

Yesterday's devastating news about the trade figures underlines the Government's manifest failure to manage the economy properly. This is not, as the Secretary of State tried to suggest, a litany of despair. It is simply a list of problems and burdens which must be borne by our people and from which the Secretary of State has failed to protect the people of Wales. I should be happy to concentrate on the news that we have to tell about Wales. As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, many of us have played our part in bringing about that good news. If only the Secretary of State would balance that by admitting to the problems created by the Government of which he is a member, and begin to talk to us seriously about tackling them.

Many other Tory policies are coming home to roost —such as the appalling student loans scheme, their failure to provide the education and training that would enable us to compete properly in the world, their determination to undermine local authorities which are trying to tackle that issue and, above all, their savage attack on the National Health Service. The National Health Service and Community Care Bill has emerged from Committee with its inconsistencies exposed. There is now no doubt about the serious attack on the NHS that it involves. The Vale of Glamorgan by-election will prove the first swallow of a Labour summer.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), in a Thatcherite outburst of the sort that we experienced in Committee, tried to rewrite history. He cannot have listened to the way in which his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health was demolished in debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) as recently as Tuesday. As time is short, I merely commend to him, to my hon. Friends and to the public, columns 1330 to 1334 in the report of Tuesday's Committee.

In my area of South Glamorgan, the Health Service is descending into chaos in advance of that crazy Bill becoming law. A cut of £7·5 million has to be found to keep within the funds that the Secretary of State has allowed. That problem is replicated throughout Wales. Every health authority is running around looking for money.

Tomorrow I shall visit two hospitals in Gwynedd. They too are under attack. Among the drastic cost-cutting exercises recommended by officers is the temporary closure of Madoc memorial hospital in Portmadoc pending permanent closure, or a reduction of nine beds at Bron-y-Garth hospital at Penrhyndeudraeth. Welsh Office Ministers are responsible for that. It is no use referring it to health authorities. Ministers are responsible for providing inadequate funds for the Health Service and for undermining the health of our people of Wales.

There is no time to list the problems facing every authority in Wales, but the list is devastating. Morale among family doctors and others is low. Welsh Office Ministers are to blame now and have responsibility about which the Secretary of State for Wales has been as silent as he has about the poll tax and the Water Act 1989. Despite the twisting and turning of Ministers, their pleas to us to trust them and the lack of detail in a shell Bill, it is now clear not only that people mistrust the Government's plans, but that they are right to do so.

Without wasting time in Committee, Opposition Members staged a series of effective debates which exposed the confusion and accountant-led bureaucratic chaos into which our National Health Service is to be plunged. That will be taken a stage further on the Floor of the House in two weeks.

Tagged on to the NHS Bill at the last minute were the Government's half-baked plans for care in the community. It is not the concept outlined in the Griffiths report which is half-baked, but the Government's failure to plan properly for care in the community. Again, that was well exposed in Committee. It has been said that a civilised nation should be judged on the quality of its care for the elderly, sick and disabled. On those criteria, the Secretary of State and his Government are guilty of an attack on our claim to be regarded as a civilised society.

On the eve of the 1983 election, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, as he now is, issued a series of predictions and warnings of the price that we would pay for Conservative rule. All of them have come true but I shall mention only three. He said:

"I warn you that you will have pain when healing and relief depend on payment."

The Health Service is not safe in their hands.

He said:

"I warn you that you will have ignorance when talents are untended and wits are wasted, when learning is a privilege and not a right."

But that is what the Conservatives are delivering to us now.

My right hon. Friend also said:

"I warn you that you will have poverty when pensions slip and pensions are whittled away by a Government that won't pay in an economy that can't pay."

My right hon. Friend's words in 1983 correctly reflect the results of the Ministers' rule.

In the conclusion to his speech, my right hon. Friend warned:

"If Margaret Thatcher were to win on that Thursday, I warn you not to be ordinary, I warn, not to be young, I warn you not to be ill and I warn you not to get old."

Those predictions have a chilling sound now. Then they had the ring of prophecy, but it has taken the Conservatives to turn that prophecy into fact and truth today. For their part in that process of bringing those words into reality, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and the Conservative Members representing Welsh constituencies stand condemned in this St. David's day debate, and they will be judged and sentenced at the next general election.

9.45 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I am sure that we are all saddened by the fact that our Welsh day debate had been overshadowed by the flooding at Towyn in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and that we all extend our sympathy to his constituents. I went up there on Tuesday and saw the terrible devastation that was caused by a combination of wind and sea.

I am sure that the House will be interested to know the latest situation there this evening. I am told that there is still a strong wind over the area and that the next high tide is due at 2.30 am. However, earlier today I was told that the tide levels are lower than earlier this week and that they are receding further each day. That will mean that the engineers who are working day and night to repair the wall will have access throughout, thus enabling them to accelerate the work. I hope that it will also mean that water will not flow regularly through the breach and that the flood water can be pumped out. That point was raised earlier. The process of pumping out will not be rapid because the main land drainage pumps have been put out of action by the floods and, although emergency pumps have been brought in and are in use, it will be some time before the others that are on the way can be set up. However, knowing the people who are there, I am sure that they are doing everything that they possibly can.

There has been a major programme of work to improve sea defences in north Wales. A £10 million programme was started in Prestatyn in 1985, of which £5·5 million has been spent. A scheme costing £2·6 million was completed in Aberconwy this year and other schemes are planned for Llandudno's west and north shores. At Colwyn Bay, schemes in excess of £1·7 million have been completed to protect Rhos-on-Sea and a £1·3 million scheme for Colwyn promenade is due to start this spring.

If further work is required as a result of the lessons learned from the present emergency, my Department will be ready to consider grant aid for that work in the usual way and under the appropriate legislation.

I am sad to note that the Opposition have been as negative as ever in this debate. I wonder if they ever realise just how damaging their gloom and doom is to the morale of the people of Wales, and especially to our young people. Of course, the Opposition have a vested interest in misery, but it never ceases to amaze me how they can ignore every item of good news.

Did the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) not see in today's Liverpool *Daily Post* the story headlined:

"Ten Million Pounds Vote of Confidence at the Sharp End",

and another headline

"Tsuda Gets Bigger Ahead of Schedule"?

Both related to the expansion of Japanese companies in north-east Wales. Is he not aware of the increased prosperity in his own constituency?

Mr. Morgan: That £10 million investment is in Oxford.

Mr. Roberts: Of course, I know that, but there is a Sharp factory in north-east Wales and the research expenditure in Oxford will back up that plant's future.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is also fortunate is having the Toyota plant coming to his constituency. He seems to have all the luck in the world but it does not do him any good. There are equally bullish stories in today's *Western Mail*. There is one headed,

"Wales set to cash in on the 1990s Boom".

That expresses the views of David Kern, the chief economist at the National Westminister bank.

The hon. Gentleman muttered about the plight of small companies and businesses under the Government. Is he not aware that our stock of new businesses is up 16 per cent. since 1982 and stands at 82,000? Wales has had the highest growth in stocks of businesses in the United Kingdom. Its production industries were 59 per cent. up between 1979 and 1988. There have been 660 manufacturing plants set up since 1979, creating 44,000 jobs.

I say to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), because both of us remember 1979 only too well, that the difference is that in 1979 Wales and Britain were running downhill and there was an enormous amount of hidden unemployment in the coal and steel industries. Even the right hon. Member had to face up to the necessity of closing uneconomic pits and making the steel industry viable by reducing capacity.

Much has been made today of wage rates in Wales. However, between 1988 and 1989, the increase in average adult weekly earnings in Wales was 9·9 per cent. above that for Great Britain as a whole, and the fourth highest regional percentage increase. I should have thought that that would cheer up Opposition Members. No fewer than six Welsh counties had increases slightly higher than the average for Great Britain.

Some industrial historical comparisons are also valid. I shall give hon. Members this one to think over. Between 1974 and 1979, average gross weekly earnings for full-time adults in Wales increased by 6·1 per cent. in real terms. Since 1984, the figure is 12·2 per cent. in real terms—exactly double the increase that the Labour Administration were able to achieve. I am sure that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) will be delighted with that because it will add to the confidence that he has been talking about creating among the Welsh people.

Mr. Rowlands: The Secretary of State frequently quotes to me the success of manufacturing in my area and exemplifies it by the Bluebird company. Will he give the average weekly wage of the women who work in that factory, compared with the average so-called weekly wage of £234 that he keeps quoting?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman picks on a particular. He knows only too well that to argue from the general to the particular just does not hold water.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have emphasised the importance of education and training. Of course, expenditure per pupil is 13·6 per cent. more in real terms for 1987-88 compared with 1979-80. The pupil-teacher ratio overall is now down to 17·1:1. We hear a lot about teacher morale and so on—the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) spoke about that—but it is a fact that the teacher-pupil ratio is as good now as it has almost ever been.

As for training, the Secretary of State said what was absolutely true of the last Labour Government. This year, we are spending five times as much on training as they were spending in 1979-80. The figure then was £31 million and this year it is £149 million.

[Mr. Roberts]

Hon. Members have spoken of skill centres. They have been transferred to Astra and will continue to provide training. That was the basis of the sale. The expertise of that management buy-out team, its proposals to development training provision and the advent of the training and enterprise councils should result in more responsive and effective training for the unemployed and employed in Wales.

It is clear that we should not easily be prepared to take lessons from Opposition Members when we are spending so much more than they spent on training and are taking training much more seriously, especially as we have now established a complete training and enterprise council network in Wales.

The community charge was mentioned by virtually every hon. Member who took part in the debate. It is clear, if only from the speech of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, that Opposition Members support local authorities that are levying community charges higher than the Government believe are justified, and in spite of the 8·6 per cent. increase in aggregate external finance. That is the total of revenue support grant, national non-domestic rates and the most specific grants. Despite all of that being made available to local authorities —*[Interruption.]* The excellent settlement achieved by my right hon. Friend put the authorities in a very good position.

The increase in teachers' pay of 7·5 per cent. was fully allowed for, as were other burdens arising from legislation and other Government initiatives. I hope that electors will hold their councils accountable for their high spending, as the Government certainly will when we review local authority budgets and when my right hon. Friend considers whether to cap their spending to protect charge payers against unreasonable demands.

That we have heard so much about the community charge in Wales, where the percentage of Government grant is so much higher than in England that the charge should be about £100 less, suggests that it is the egalitarian principle that everyone should pay something towards the costs of their local authorities that is under attack.

During the debate we came across two points put to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. He was asked to guarantee that in the event of Labour Members coming to office they would maintain the differential of grant between England and Wales. It is about 20 per cent. But he failed to give that assurance.

I must now press the hon. Gentleman extremely hard on that. Is he saying that the next Labour Government would not preserve that 20 per cent. differential? He knows that the rate of grant in Wales is 66 per cent. compared with 46 per cent. in England. I am now giving him every opportunity to say——

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: I am putting the question to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who is a member of the shadow Cabinet. Will he tell the people of Wales whether that differential will be preserved? Yes or no?

Mr. Barry Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me at 9.59 pm. I want to tell him in all sincerity that, whenever there is a Labour Government, they always give Wales a much better deal than do the Conservatives——

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Jones: I can tell the hon. Gentleman without a shadow of doubt——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

PETITION

Local Government Finance (Basildon)

10 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I ask leave to present a petition signed by a number of my constituents in Basildon. They draw to the attention of the House the fact that, last year, Socialist-controlled Basildon district council imposed the highest rate increase in the country —57·2 per cent. My constituents are especially worried because, since the imposition of that increase, the council has continued to spend huge amounts of ratepayers' money.

My constituents are concerned about money that has been spent on area management and leisure facilities, and about the council's voting another £1·6 million to subsidise the Towngate theatre to prevent it going into liquidation.

Finally, my constituents are concerned about the money that has been spent on the new civic centre. Last week the council spent £46,000 on sending every person in Basildon a Valentine card. The petition reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for the Environment to use his powers of influence to ensure that local authorities such as Basildon do not set excessively high rates of community charge, the average of which should be no more than £278, and if they do, that he should cap the community charge. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Fostering

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John. M. Taylor.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to discuss the important subject of the adoption and fostering of black children, generally from the ethnic minorities, by white parents. This has been the subject of controversy and of some public interest. Last year it was connected with a great deal of apparent injustice and unhappiness, and I believe that the issue has an important influence on the way in which the country develops as an integrated, multiracial, assimilated and tolerant society.

I shall argue that Government policy on this matter needs clarifying, and that the advice that the Government give to social services departments and other fostering agencies, many of which are independent, should be more rigorous. Secondly, I shall argue that much of the advice behind present Government policy has been based on a view of racial identity that owes more to ideology and a divisive form of anti-racism than to reason or scientific evidence, particularly in connection with fostering. Thirdly, I shall argue that additional guidelines on fostering and adoption are required, particularly on monitoring adoption policies and the time limits appropriate to them.

I start by emphasising that 80,000 children in this country are in care or foster homes, one third of whom require placement in a given year. There is no doubt that the vast majority, whether placed through council social services departments or through specialist agencies, are put in good homes which are right for their future development.

In the last two or three years there have been two significant retrograde developments. The first is that a same-race fostering and adoption policy has taken hold in many adoption agencies and social services departments. The argument is that a child can only develop properly with foster parents or adoptive parents of the same ethnic or racial origin. That policy is being applied more rigidly throughout the country. Secondly, not only have there been the appalling cases that we saw last year, where black children were taken away from white foster parents, sometimes after nine years of living together effectively as a family, but there is evidence that because of the same-race fostering policy, young black children are having to wait longer for places.

Hilary Chambers, who is a founder of Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services, says:

"Since 1987 the number of under five year old black children on the BMI parent register"—

a significant register—

"has quadrupled."

In 1987 she did a small survey. She found that only four of 22 children had been waiting for more than six months for placement with a family, and none longer than a year. Yet only two years later no fewer than 36 out of 75 young black children had been waiting for longer than six months; 17 had been waiting longer than one year, and four had been waiting longer than two years for a foster placement which should be regarded as their right in a civilised society.

More significantly, Mrs. Chambers thought that that was just the tip of the iceberg and that hundreds of black children were waiting for the right to a foster home, and were living in institutional care in the meantime. She said:

"Whatever the different views on same race placements it is terribly dangerous for a child to be shunted around short term foster parents or to be institutionalised in a council home."

Even more damaging and more distressing are the cases of black children who are taken from white foster parents largely because of the implementation of the same-race policy. In August last year in Croydon we had an example where a 17-month-old mixed race boy was taken from his white foster mother and placed with the black family who already had children but who wanted a boy. In the home counties a 14-year-old black boy was taken from a white family by the social services department, despite the fact that he had been living there for no less than eight years.

In Birmingham two white foster parents—reasonable and sensible foster parents—were told by the social services department that they would never be allowed to adopt the black children they were caring for. *The Independent* on 31 October last year reported the case of a two-year-old Asian girl in Birmingham:

"Social services officials want to place this girl with an Asian family.

Her foster mother said: 'She thinks everyone who comes to the door is going to take her away. She says she wants to stay here with her mummy and daddy.'

'We're the only family she has ever known. We took her when she was just a six-day-old baby, and we've brought her up as our own. She is just so attached to us both, and we love her very much.'"

All the social services department had to say was:

"We intend to find her another family. She is an Asian child and that is one of the criteria we use."

I can scarcely conceive a more inhuman approach to a social services problem than that exhibited by that department in the west midlands.

Again, even those cases may be just the tip of the iceberg. Children First, another group in this field, has estimated that there are 20 cases in which white foster parents are battling to keep their black children living with them. So far, in only three cases have they been successful. Although the circumstances of these cases are difficult to verify—very often they are sub judice or confidential, or reports are not publicly available—the fact is that this is a widespread problem which has been recognised by the Department of Health. Indeed, in January this year the Department felt it necessary to issue guidelines on this aspect of fostering policy, and the Commission for Racial Equality has done likewise.

It is my contention that the Government's guidelines, although well meaning, are not rigorous enough and that they allow social services departments to make rigid interpretations of same-race adoption policy and still feel that they are within the guidelines that have been laid down. Equally, I believe, interpretations are based on the sort of advice that has been given to the CRE and, indeed, has been coming from the CRE—advice that is anti-racist, divisive, segregationist and, therefore, wrong for race relations in this country in the long term.

On the face of it, the Department of Health guidelines are fairly anodyne. They say:

"Each case must be considered on its merits having regard to the needs of children requiring placement. Racial origin is an important factor in placements."

Then, more dubiously, they say:

"In the great majority of cases"—

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

I find that difficult to believe—

"placement with a family of similar ethnic origin or religion is likely to meet a child's needs as fully as possible and best safeguard his or her welfare."

Of course, the guidelines quote the Children Act 1989, which imposes responsibilities on the Government, or the boarding-out regulations. Only when reference is made to the CRE document does one see a less balanced version of this advice. I believe that the CRE's advice is steeped in this anti-racist, rather than multicultural, philosophy, which, as I said earlier, is divisive. Michael Day, in his introduction to the CRE document, says:

"Love and care is essential for a foster placement but is not the only component of good parenting for ethnic minority groups."

I wonder why he should have to make a differentiation between ethnic minority groups and other groups of children. He goes on:

"One of the essences of fostering should be to allow black children to affirm a racial identity . . . A child's overall welfare will be decisively affected by the issue of race."

I find that that has not been proven. Mr. Day then talks about

"inherent difficulties of transracial fostering"

and, even more dubiously, he says:

"There is a strong body of opinion"—

acutally there is not, as I shall demonstrate in a moment—

"that same-race fostering is conducive to a child's confidence and sense of identity."

Possibly worst of all, this document, on page 13, says that if a black child who has been with a white foster family, for however many years, says, "I should like to remain here" he should be interrogated, and the attitudes and feelings underlying this perfectly legitimate preference should be talked through to ensure that the child understands the issues before such a decision is made. So a social worker will sit down with that black child and say, "Although you know these people as your mother and father, the fact is that it may not be right. We think that, because you are black, you may have to go elsewhere." That is a policy which simply cannot be justified.

Given such advice, it is scarcely surprising that the same-race policy, at a more rigorous level, is reflected in the policies of the agencies. For instance, the British Association of Adoption and Fostering, as it was, said:

"The placement of choice for a black child is always a black family."

When the organisation became Families for Ever, having changed its name and, apparently, to a certain extent, its policies and guidelines, it said:

"We believe that the placement choice for a black child is always a black family."

When one looks at "Be My Parents" one sees the photographs that are given to potential foster parents. Under the photographs of the black children—not the others; just the black children—are the words "Black parents are required". Children First tells me that white foster parents are finding it difficult to adopt a black child even when they have already fostered a black child. Whatever the intention and advice of the Department of Health, the practice of fostering agencies is much more rigid and inflexible.

Why do I regard the practice as extremely dangerous? First, and possibly most important of all, it is evidence of an anti-racist ideology that seems to be obsessed with racial identity, with emphasising the difference between people rather than what they have in common. The result is a tendency to ghettoise sections of the community into particular kinds of ethnic minorities and others. That is a form of apartheid. We have seen that in South Africa and we have not regarded it as acceptable there. Sadly, it is seen too often here.

Secondly, there is the assumption that because someone has a black skin he or she will automatically face significant racial discrimination at a certain time in life and as a result he or she should be trained to combat that in an appropriate family.

Thirdly, as Conor Cruise O'Brien said, the practice tends to treat children not as children with different needs but as racial units. Fourthly, there is no scientific evidence in favour of same-race fostering. The CRE report states that the commission could not find any evidence in Britain or in America that it allowed children to develop more fully. Doctor Dora Black of the Royal Free hospital, who is a psychologist specialising in child matters, has said that race is only one element, and not necessarily the most important, in a fostering decision. She said that the most important element is attachment. The director of social work at Edinburgh university said that the quality of relationship between child and carer is paramount, not race. Christine Pickering of Glasgow university said that those who favour rigid same-race fostering show evidence of a fashion that is a fantasy, and polemic, rather then reason, is governing their judgment. Most important of all, I submit that it is the evidence and experience of hundreds of families, perhaps thousands, throughout the country that white parents who have fostered black and other ethnic minority children have become happy and well-adjusted families in a real sense that militates against a rigid same-race adoption policy.

What are the implications for Government policy and advice to agencies and social service departments? First, it should be made plainer that fostering policy should not be used as an instrument of racial or social policy or as a means of bolstering black identity. It should be stressed that it should be used purely for the benefit of an individual child. It should be made clear that the colour of a child's skin is only one of the many factors that should be taken into account, especially when dealing with the youngest children where no attachment to a cultural or linguistic identity is evident. Far more important is the environment—emotional, social and intellectual, irrespective of colour of skin—into which the child is to be sent.

Secondly, the Government must recognise, as Una Cottingham, another child expert recognised, that delay in fostering means damage:

"An infant needs to attach".

There is no excuse for any delay. The Government must set a time limit outside which delays, whether they be for same-race reasons or not, are unacceptable. A limit should be set irrespective of colour.

Thirdly, there should be limits on temporary fostering. It is unrealistic to say to a foster parent, "Don't worry. Take this child in. You will have her on a temporary basis and we, the social service department, will take her back from you whenever we feel like it." The bonds that inevitably develop between the child and the parent—whether a foster parent or the real parent—are too strong and too natural to allow that kind of temporary contract, which should be monitored more carefully.

During the Government review of adoption policies, there ought to be a presumption of a time limit beyond

which foster parents would have a right to adopt, all other things being equal, and if they have the agreement of the child, and possibly of the natural parent.

The fourth point is that adoption panels and social workers should monitor placement delays. At the moment adoption panels decide whether a child is suitable for adoption and leave the time scale to the social workers. I believe that adoption panels should have a statutory interest in how quickly a child is placed. Thus, in a crucial area of child care, one could avoid the great cruelties—and I use that word advisedly—that were evident last year. We could reduce the delay that is increasingly evident when finding homes for these unfortunate children and we could increase the quality of placements. Most important of all, we could promote a society which is genuinely inter-racial, as much as multi-racial, which is integrated as well as multi-cultural and which is respectful of race, but conscious of our common identity as British men and women.

10.20 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I think that the House owes a debt of gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) for raising this sensitive and important subject. There has been widespread and understandable concern, over the past year particularly, about the extent to which children's individual needs and circumstances, their emotional well-being and their whole stability were being jeopardised by adherence to the rigid principle of same-race placements. It is a very important matter, and I think that my hon. Friend is to be congratulated on outlining it so clearly and forcefully.

In the Department, we have been carefully considering the guidance which is given to local authorities. We wanted to make it unequivocally clear that it is the child's welfare that should be considered in all cases of fostering and adoption. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) steered the enormously important Children Act 1989 through the House last year. We also updated the new foster placement regulations, and we have been reviewing and considering the directions and the regulations concerning children and their well-being.

It was in that context, and following the cases which caused such concern last year, that in January the chief inspector of the social services inspectorate wrote to all directors of social services setting out the principles which should inform family placement work in relation to the issues of race and culture, within a legal and professional framework.

I must briefly summarise the Government's view, which is that both race and culture are important factors in selecting foster parents and adoptive parents for children in care. The Children Act specifically requires local authorities to have regard, in all decisions concerning a child that they are looking after, to the child's religious persuasion, cultural and linguistic background and racial origins. That requirement formalises an approach which should already be a central element in child care practice.

Certainly we encourage efforts to persuade those from ethnic minorities to come forward, so that children from an ethnic minority may be more likely to have a choice of parents from a similar background. However, we strongly and clearly share the view expressed by my hon. Friend that rigidly and dogmatically applied policies, which place racial and cultural factors above the needs of the child, are not appropriate. Children are children. They have their own particular needs and circumstances. Those circumstances and their wishes should be fully taken into account. A child of an appropriate age should be able to express his own wishes and feelings. It is quite clear that there are many circumstances in which a placement with a family of different race can be in a child's interests, if that family can understand and meet the child's needs, including those needs which arise from racial and cultural background.

It is important to stress that the child's welfare and all the other factors involved must be considered when finding the most appropriate placement. No one separate factor should be abstracted and converted into a precondition that overrides all the others. The only general policy that is acceptable in making decisions about placing children in adoptive or foster homes is that all the factors should be considered and that their welfare should be paramount.

There may well be circumstances in which placement with a family of a different ethnic origin is the best choice for a child. A child may have formed strong links with prospective foster parents or adopters, or be related. There may be step-brothers or sisters, not all of the same ethnic origin, who may need placement together. A child may prefer and need to remain close to his school, friends or family, even though the foster parents are not of the same ethnic origin. A child with special needs may require carers with particular qualities or abilities. In those circumstances, the choice is limited.

None of us would consider that any parents have a right to a child. In all circumstances, it is the child whose needs must be fully and properly considered and his welfare made paramount. My hon. Friend spoke of his anxiety that an over-rigid policy can condemn children to a lengthy wait for a placement, during which time the local authority can be searching for what it deems to be the ideal ethnic match for that child. As my hon. Friend pointed out so clearly, delay, indecision or change of placement can often be enormously damaging to a child's fragile welfare and identity. There are many times when a decision and a clear plan for a child's future is in his best interests.

In recent years, considerable progress has been made on the welfare of children and their placements. Many fewer children are in children's homes or subject to care arrangements that are essentially temporary. Timing is a matter of critical importance in planning and providing for children. Time limits must be set which are appropriate to a child's age and circumstances, and they must be kept under careful review. A child should not be left indefinitely in an interim placement or, even worse, in a series of interim placements, while a permanent placement is sought. It is part of the task of the agencies to set and to monitor proper time limits.

I understand and share my hon. Friend's concern about reports of cases where children seem to have been removed from foster parents solely on account of ethnic origin. However, I urge caution because it is easy to take a simplistic view of a case on the basis of press reports. Children are sometimes removed from foster homes, often for a variety of good reasons which are in the children's interests. But it is important that, when a child is placed with a temporary foster parent, that foster parent should be taken through the process. As my hon. Friend rightly

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

said, there is a process of bonding and it can be extremely painful if the foster parent is not aware of, and fully involved in, the long-term plans for the child.

I hope that my hon. Friend will read again the recent guidance issued by the Department. The chief inspector of social services has taken a great deal of time and trouble to consult on and to talk through the new guidance. It makes it clear that the points to which my hon. Friend addressed himself should be incorporated in good practice. As he rightly said, children are not "racial units". It is important that adoption and fostering policy should not be an instrument of racial or social policy. The colour of an individual is only one aspect of a child, an important aspect, but one among many, and his emotional, social and intellectual well-being should most clearly and strongly be taken into account. One of the most important points is that delay for children so often means damage to the child's well-being.

We intend to follow up the guidance to ensure that the adoption and fostering practices of local authorities adhere to good practice. This evening's debate has been a useful further opportunity to clarify precisely the aims and intentions of the Government.

Above all, it is essential that children in the care of a local authority, and children who need fostering or adoption, have their needs fully and fairly met, without rigid and ideological adherence to one aspect of their welfare. The guidance, and the helpful contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest, will ensure that we can make greater headway in ensuring that children's needs are paramount.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 2 March 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Local Government Finance

9.35 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): This is an anti-poll tax petition. It is the tip of the iceberg and has been organised by the London Anti-Poll Tax Campaign with which I have been associated for some time, including addressing a meeting in your constituency, Mr. Speaker. The petition reads:

"To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of the People of London sheweth that legislation to introduce a poll tax will place an unbearable financial burden upon your petitioners, subsidise wealthy people at the direct expense of others, create fear and despondency amongst those who cannot pay, disfranchise many who will be frightened to claim their right to vote, attack the civil liberties of your petitioners by opening up areas of sensitive and private information for the Poll Tax Registrar, destroy the democratic freedom of your petitioners to elect local councillors who can act with a degree of independence from the power of the central state. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take measures to hold a national referendum on the Poll Tax legislation. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc."

This is the worst taxation system that has ever been introduced——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot make a speech on this. He has presented the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Planning Permission (Demolition of Houses) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.37 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Having had no more luck in 14 years of parliamentary ballots for private Member's Bills than I have had in premium bond draws, I wasted no emotional energy on hoping to get a Bill on to the statute book and I harboured no preconceptions about a desirable subject for private Member's legislation when, surprisingly, my name popped out of the hat at the beginning of this Session.

The many unsolicited suggestions that I received were almost all for major Bills. Some were highly controversial and, moved by Member No. 6 in the order of precedence, stood no chance of reaching the statute book in the limited time available. The Bills proposed to me by the Government Whips seemed either so bland and banal as to offer no appreciable benefit to my constituents or to be legislative afterthoughts which it was really the duty of the Government to enact, rather than a private Member in probably his sole chance of a lifetime.

Wearied by a surfeit of juggernaut Bills in Government time, I sought a short and simple measure whose object would be clearly defined in its title, whose guiding principle would be widely supported by the general public and whose philosophy was traditionally shared by my party. The measure should secure the backing of Members of all parties in the House; above all, it should accord with the publicly proclaimed policies of Her Majesty's Government. At that point, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) generously proposed that I promote his admirable one-clause Bill to make it obligatory to apply for planning permission before demolishing a dwelling house, and I readily agreed.

Having been introduced formally by my hon. Friend in two earlier Parliaments, the Bill is by now well known to the Department of the Environment and has enjoyed favourable press comment. There has been ample time for it to be considered, not only by the Government but by all interested parties.

My hon. Friend's list of sponsors impressed me: they were all Conservative Members with impeccable parliamentary credentials, the sum of whose total political experience was, in my view, at least a match for that of Ministers in the Department of the Environment. These Back Benchers had a proven record of distinguished service to constituents and party alike, and their collective judgment could only be regarded as sound. When it comes to private Members' Bills, by their sponsors shall ye know them.

When I adopted the Bill, I believed that many of the arguments in favour of it would be self-evident—that they would virtually speak for themselves. Certainly I hope that neither I nor other hon. Members need detain the House with long speeches on Second Reading. The clear purpose behind the Bill accords entirely with the Government's much-vaunted desire to protect the environment—a desire

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

that is earnestly shared on both sides of the House, and in the country as a whole—although its detailed and technical practicalities can be fully tested only in Committee. While I do not pretend to be a planning boffin, I believe that it represents the views of people up and down the country. I make no bold prescriptive claims on its behalf, but I can assert that it meets an urgent need that should be addressed immediately.

The 1987 Conservative election manifesto contains a section on planning and the environment, which puts the Bill in its political context. It begins:

"Conservatives are by instinct conservationists—committed to preserve all that is best of our country's past. We are determined to maintain our national heritage of countryside and architecture . . . Wherever possible we want to encourage large-scale developments to take place on unused and neglected land in our towns and cities rather than in the countryside."

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the magnificent service that he is doing to the country? The number of Conservative Members who are present this morning illustrates the concern that is felt by them, and by the planning group of which I, like my hon. Friend, am an active member.

May I make two points? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have been slow to do something about the thousands of acres of vacant public land lying dormant and surplus to requirements? Should they not dispose of that eyesore and build on land that is being stored by public organisations, rather than on green-field sites? Secondly, as regards my hon. Friend's Bill——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would not the hon. Gentleman's comments be made more appropriately in a speech later?

Mr. Steen: Yes, they would, Mr. Speaker, but I shall not be making a speech this morning.

Mr. Speaker: That is what was worrying me.

Mr. Steen: May I finish my short intervention, Mr. Speaker? It is in the spirit of the Bill.

Secondly, does my hon. Friend agree that the Bill, although well measured and well thought out, is likely to give rise to enormous planning bureaucracy? Will not more and more time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am terribly sorry, but I still think that the hon. Gentleman's remarks would be more appropriate as part of a speech. I know that his constituency is a long way away, and I shall try to get him in nice and early.

Mr. Wilkinson: I appreciate my hon. Friend's intervention, and defer to his considerable experience, which goes back many years and has done our party a singular service. I hope that he will be lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and will make an appropriate intervention later on the specific subject of the extra bureaucracy to which the Bill may or may not lead.

The manifesto continues:

"We want to improve on our performance in 1986, when nearly half of all new development took place on reused land."

The overriding impression of existing planning law is that confusion reigns supreme, that inexplicable anomalies abound and that, when it comes to protecting the citizen's residential environment, current legislation is gravely deficient. The definition of what constitutes development is itself ambiguous, being—I quote from section 22 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971—

"the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land."

Development, of course, requires prior planning permission. Although to the layman the wording of that provision in that 1971 Act would seem to preclude demolition of a dwelling house without prior planning permission—as demolishing a house must, by making it uninhabitable, constitute a change of use—local authorities have assumed demolition to be outside the ambit of planning control, an assumption that has not been challenged successfully in the courts.

The man in the street cannot comprehend why planning permission should be required before a householder can initiate relatively minor changes to the size and structure of his home, which impinge very little on the amenity of his neighbours or the environment of the area, while to turn that home into a wasteground by means of demolition is unrestrainedly permissible.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): My hon. Friend said that the proposition that demolition was not development had not been challenged successfully in the courts. Will he not go further and point out that it has been challenged unsuccessfully—in the case of nissen huts, for instance? Why has he not attempted to expand the definition of development to include demolition, which would surely be a rather simpler way of achieving what he wishes to achieve?

Mr. Wilkinson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful and thoughtful intervention. I was seeking to make the Bill as simple as possible; the expansion of its legislative proposals to make them more thorough and effective could readily be accomplished in Committee. That is why the Bill should go to Committee, and that is why I commend it for Second Reading today.

No amount of willowherb in July or blackberries in autumn on a bomb site can compensate for the loss of quality of life or drop in property values of those who live around and beside sites of such legalised neighbourhood vandalism. The contrast between the necessity for prior planning permission for relatively small changes to a dwelling house and the lack of such a requirement to sanction its demolition is tantamount to granting a residential landscape greater legal protection against minor alteration than against its destruction.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my hon. Friend envisage that there will be an appeals procedure in the Bill? If there was such a procedure, would it not lead to blight, which might be even more deleterious to the environment than the waste land to which he has referred?

Mr. Wilkinson: That argument is ideally suited for Standing Committee. By instinct I am inclined towards such an appeals procedure, but the arguments to the contrary advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East may be telling.

Sadly, the abuses that I have described seldom come singularly. If two or three adjacent properties can be acquired and flattened, the unscrupulous can present to a local authority a case for redevelopment in an area which

otherwise would undoubtedly have been protected by a refusal of planning permission. Although, over the years, a specific and effective system of protecting listed dwellings and homes in conservation areas from demolition without the strictest and most exceptional prior planning permission has been in place, and has been universally welcomed, the lack of a clear legal control of demolition has long caused deep public anxiety.

The report by Mr. G. Dobry QC which was published in 1974 on the control of demolition gave clear practical reasons for a generalised extension of planning control over demolition and those reasons remain equally valid 16 years on. His first reason related to the aftermath of demolition. Barren sites, inadequately fenced, often become a dumping ground causing general deterioration of the neighbourhood. Secondly, demolition as a fait accompli can be used by developers to force the granting of planning permission. Finally premature demolition and vacancy of residential accommodation in anticipation of development causes public disquiet.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I entirely support ths admirable measure, and hope that it receives its Second Reading today. However, I wonder whether my hon. Friend is aware of a further dimension to the problem. In areas of south suburban London such as mine, when houses are demolished gratuitously, it is almost an invitation for local gipsies, didicois and tinkers to come in and occupy those sites with their caravans, causing enormous annoyance to local residents and considerable law and order hazards.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend has made a very wise observation; he has greatly reinforced and amplified the arguments.

By enacting this Bill, the Government and the House could at last rectify the error of not implementing the recommendation in Mr. Dobry's report, which the Department of the Environment sponsored. The Committee stage of this Bill would usefully constitute the process of public consultation, as all interested parties would undoubtedly make representations once legislation became imminent rather than merely hypothetical.

If the Department of the Environment were to promote its own planning Bill next Session, as has been suggested to me by Ministers—there is no certainty that it will be able to do that in current foreseeable electoral circumstances—my Bill, if enacted, could be consolidated later into the new Bill. That would save valuable legislative time in what must be the last full Session before the next general election.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Is my hon. Friend aware that certain planning officers, particularly in my borough of Richmond upon Thames, have suggested to me that the Government are planning a consolidation of planning legislation whether or not there is a new law? Therefore, would my hon. Friend's Bill not be ideal for consolidation in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Wilkinson: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right; I am grateful to him for that additional information from a specialist professional source.

The Bill is not, as some would wrongly describe it, a surburban dwellers' charter or a Bill to address a problem which confronts London and the home counties alone. I remember, when I represented Bradford, West in 1970, that the same unprincipled practices of demolition were used in Bradford to force out elderly people and break up happy communities in inner-city streets of basically sound houses to make space for high rise flats and other blots on an urban residential landscape which deserved to be cherished, not bulldozed.

The protection afforded by listing buildings and conservation areas is not enough. Most people do not live in homes of outstanding architectural or historic interest or in neighbourhoods of obvious natural beauty. However, their homes and those of their neighbours and friends represent a treasured quality of life for them and their children for which the law, in all equity, should provide comparable safeguards. Just because people do not live in conservation areas or listed dwellings should not, by virtue of the insouciance of Government, make them vulnerable to depredations upon their environment of the demolition men.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will, I am sure, profess sympathy for the Bill. If so, I welcome it. However, he should also remember that the public will see the Government's reaction to the Bill as a touchstone of their environmental credentials.

People will be looking to see the Government's sympathetic rhetoric matched by prompt and urgent action. I offer the Government an incomparable legislative opportunity to redress a manifest abuse. Those whose neighbourhoods are at risk from the men with the ball and chain expect action from the Government now.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environnent has all the right instincts. He is courteous, sensitive, civilised, well-read and intelligent. He should do what the Labour Government did for the late Duncan Sandys's Civic Amenities Bill in 1967 which designated conservation areas—we should give this Bill a fair wind into Committee and beyond to the statute book.

As for the number of extra planning posts that the Bill might require on implementation, I can say only that, as with the enforcement of the poll tax, the Government can will the means if they so wish. The Government hitherto have said that they will try to have the Bill talked out. I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench that loyalty should operate both ways. We must secure from Government the enactment of legislative proposals from their supporters, like this brief but constructive Bill, just as much as they demand unquestioning backing for Government legislation whose merits are, candidly, often not immediately apparent.

I warn the House that parliamentary stratagems such as having a Bill talked out may seem the height of political sophistry to their would-be perpetrators—I have witnesses that that action has been prepared—but before it is put into action, I advise my colleagues that outside the House it will appear to be parliamentary sabotage not just of this modest but deserving legislation, but of the important Bill which lies second on today's Order Paper.

Mr. Leigh: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wilkinson: No. I have nearly finished.

Before coming to the House, I did my right hon. and hon. Friends, other than Ministers and their Parliamentary Private Secretaries, the courtesy of soliciting by letter their views on my proposed legislation. Of those with prior political engagements elsewhere this day, 42 were in favour of the Bill. One was in favour, with

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reservations which he said that I could doubtless remove if we were to talk. One was at the Council of Europe. Two were otherwise abroad. One kept his options open by leaving both parts of the form unmarked. Another said that he could not declare himself, let alone be present, because he would have to chair the Standing Committee if the Bill received a Second Reading. A further nine declared their support for the Bill in writing and their determination to attend the debate.

Only one of my right hon. and hon. Friends expressed any opposition to the Bill.

"We will plan ourselves into perdition,"

he wrote,

"if we are not careful."

I hope that the Government are careful with the Bill and do not side with the odd man out. Therein lies total isolation and the road to political perdition. However, I have faith that the collective wisdom of hon. Members will prevail to see this little Bill safely through the House and to grant it a Second Reading this day.

10 am

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on his good luck in the ballot and on introducing a Bill that will have some merit if the Standing Committee business is targeted at resolving some inherent problems in the present planning procedure. There must be procedures to ensure that permission to demolish houses is not as forthcoming as it is at present. Therefore, there is merit in considering this brief Bill.

Reference has been made to appeals procedures. In any democracy, the individual must have the right to appeal against any decision that is taken by a local planning authority. The appeals procedure must apply in this case, as it does in other planning cases. It is important that the demolition appeals procedure is so constructed that there are no outstanding lengthy appeals as there are in other planning matters. If the Bill is granted a Second Reading, the appeals procedure will be an important topic in Committee. The appeals inspectorate must be strengthened and all aspects of planning procedures must be speeded up. Further, we must include in the legislation a provision requiring consistency in any planning proposals and decisions.

The hon. Gentleman referred to subsidence. Mining subsidence has caused the demolition of property in many constituencies. Hon. Members must direct attention at demolition problems that are caused by mining subsidence. There must be close co-operation and discussions with British Coal when mine workings are planned in high-density residential areas. Mining subsidence problems should be considered before any demolition takes place. That may include the planning of workings in urban and rural areas where great suffering takes place because of mining subsidence.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I confess that I did not expect the debate to turn into a mining debate. Will the hon. Gentleman explain why it seems that the Labour party's policy has changed since it rejected Mr. Dobry's report in 1974? I shall be interested to hear his reply.

Mr. O'Brien: I did not intend the debate to develop into a mining debate. I was just replying to a point that was made by the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood. He referred to subsidence. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is trying to introduce a wider debate on mining procedures. I am prepared to do that, because I am a mining man, but I know that you would stop me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have a view, too, and I would not permit it.

Mr. O'Brien: I do not wish to intrude on your stewardship this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford wishes to raise that issue, perhaps he could do so in Committee.

Reference has been made to the Town and Country Planning Bill now in another place. I hope that we will discuss planning procedures during the consolidation of the legislation. This brief Bill would help to strengthen the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, which has been in existence for many years and needs consolidating.

Opposition Members will not oppose the Bill. Given the proposals that have been outlined by its promoter, I support the application that the Bill should be referred to a Standing Committee. I hope that the Minister will accept the merits of the Bill and allow it to proceed to Committee.

10.7 am

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it gives me the opportunity to pay a warm tribute to the promoter of the Bill, my hon. and good Friend and colleague the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) for his work in taking this modest measure a step further, in the crucial habit and custom—which resembles winning the treble chance except that one does not get any money—known as the ballot for private Members Bills. Even to be No. 6 has enormous potential—it is never as good as No. 1, but it is said that half way between one and 12 is pretty good.

My hon. Friend could have chosen a number of extremely beguiling measures, such as those produced from independent intellectual thought and those coming from the Government's labours. Sometimes, interesting Government Bills can be taken up by hon. Members. Instead, my hon. Friend chose this proposal. I am most grateful to him for that and also for adhering to the original text, which was drafted with the usual consummate skill by the Public Bill Office. Lest my hon. Friend the Minister suggest that there is any deficiency in the text, I must state that it is pristine—a gem of a Bill—as I am sure he will agree if he is allowed to say what he really feels, which I know that he will be tempted to do because he is a humane man.

Mr. Forman: He is human, too.

Mr. Dykes: Yes, he is human, too.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood quoted several of the respondents to whom he wrote his impressive letter asking for support. I have also received some correspondence because people know that I have been associated with my hon. Friend's initiative. Although I cannot give the name, I have with me a letter from a member of the Government Whips Office. Paragraph two of that striking letter states:

"Obviously I cannot join your delegation as a Government Whip"—

referring to one of our visits to the Department—

"though I will most certainly be with you in spirit."

In recent months I had become disillusioned with the Government monolith and had been thinking that there was no end to Cabinet-only rule, and that no consideration was given to alternative ideas. Perhaps it is down to one individual now and even the Cabinet only gets a little look in. Because I was demoralised by those developments, that letter gave me new hope because I knew that my parliamentary colleagues in the Government were human beings, too, and that they would listen to cogent arguments. Those cogent arguments were advanced magisterially and non-histrionically by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood.

As both my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien)—to whom we are grateful for his support—have said, the Bill may felicitously and practically be included in later consolidation if, as has been rumoured, a Government planning Bill is introduced in the autumn. It is thus not an attempt mischieviously to anticipate or to distort any future objectives. Although I should not dream of identifying them, officials in the Department have hinted that they and the Government have never really liked private Members Bills suggesting planning proposals. They are always uneasy about that and prefer it to be a departmental and official initiative. I can understand that to some extent because of the complexities of our planning laws and the underlying rules and regulations. However, the Department was moving towards an understanding of the concept of the Bill despite worries about the dangers of an increase in the bureaucracy and the expense of legitimate planning applications and their resolutions. I share that anxiety.

Although I do not presume to be a substitute promoter for the Bill and am merely a loyal supporter of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood, nevertheless, as he so kindly said, I was the original designer of the proposal when it was launched and promulgated through the ordinary presentation procedure. However, with all the emphasis that I can command today, I stress that the Bill is not in any way an anti-property developer measure. That would be manifestly absurd for Conservative Members who strongly believe in legitimate private enterprise activity, private industry and private effort in industrial and commercial achievements. That applies to the important sector of property developers, estate developers, house builders and all those involved in the general industry. Incidentally, compared with other European countries that sector is highly developed and highly sophisticated in Britain.

I pay tribute to the many decent property developers who, although they cannot say so publicly because presumably they have to support their federation and trade associations, have expressed a degree of support for the measure privately to me and, I believe, to a number of my colleagues. They have witnessed the vandalism that has been launched by the indecent, illegitimate and over-ruthless property developers who do not have the same regard for the general good as the vast number of decent property developers. The latter category are concerned about the need to provide lower-cost housing in the more expensive southern areas and in the greater London conurbation rather than doing as the more ruthless property developers wish and concentrating on the expensive end of the market, building £300,000 retirement flats for elderly people who no longer need a mortgage and can indulge in a cash-only deal. The decent tribe of property developers reject that because their priority and wish is to provide socially useful housing—with a reasonable profit for themselves, of course—but they are often prevented from doing that by the activities of the indecent minority.

Although the Bill is brief and seems modest, it is crucial because it removes an outdated anomaly. The more I think about it, the more astonishing it seems, that in 1990 there is no local control over the first crucial stage of the redevelopment process on any given site. This applies both in conurbations and in rural areas. Incidentally, we are glad to have the support of our rural colleagues from all parties. The problem affects both north and south, and it will afflict the north more and more unless we deal with it now. As I have said, there is no local control over the first crucial stage of planning and development activity, which is the demolition of an existing building or buildings.

The rapacious minority of property developers are not concerned with the public good. My own constituency saw the notorious case in which one half of a pair of 1930s semi-detached dwellings was pulled down without the inhabitants of the adjoining house having any control or say, or even being notified. That scandal has been mentioned in the press, and it was referred to again this week in the *Evening Standard*.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Spicer): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I will certainly return some compliments about him when I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have seen reports of the case to which he has just referred—indeed, a trade magazine recently carried a lengthy report of it—but how widespread is that type of case? I keep hearing about that one instance. I should genuinely like to know whether my hon. Friend has any evidence of the problem being more widespread.

Mr. Dykes: That case triggered my attention to this amazing situation for the first time. There are no controls over the first step in the planning process although there are fully developed controls over all the rest—the redevelopment and the rebuilding. Nevertheless developers seem to have a growing tendency no longer to pull down first one dwelling but to say, "Because my super-normal profits can come only from ever larger scale developments in the face of ferocious competition from my rapacious property developer friends, whom I know intimately because we all play golf together, I must do this on an ever larger scale and pull down not one unit, but clusters of houses."

I have heard from witnesses not only in my constituency but elsewhere, and I have with me a file containing just one twentieth of the examples that I have received from all over the country and from many colleagues, to whom I am grateful for sending me that information. Some developers pull down six, 10 or 12 houses, only to find that one awkward old lady has the cheek not to wish to leave her home. That is utter heresy and entirely unacceptable to the developers, so she has to be bribed, winkled or harrassed out.

The phenomenon will recur in greater measure in the future. After all, to whom do the banks most wish to provide finance? It must be to the property industry, which is one of the best securities of all, notwithstanding the present recession. That is why we must deal with these problems. In answer to my hon. Friend the Minister, those

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examples are widespread and of crucial importance, I repeat that that horrific case was the trigger for me. Mr. and Mrs. Williams of Harrow Weald responded with a civilised restraint which still astonishes me, bearing in mind what they have suffered. That case triggered me into paying further attention to the present extraordinary anomaly.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the hon. Gentleman ask the Minister to visit the Docklands developments, because if he wants to see instances of developers demolishing residential properties by their tens, twenties and hundreds, the evidence is there. Good properties are being demolished without consultation with anyone. That is happening not only in the London Docklands area, but in other urban development corporation areas. The evidence exists and the hon. Gentleman should remind his hon. Friend about it.

Mr. Dykes: That interesting thought shows once again that this issue is not simply an indulgence of outer London suburban Members of Parliament wishing to deal with a pet problem. It is a national matter, affecting urban and rural areas, north and south.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: No, I shall not give way for a moment because I may run into the danger of speaking too long and I wish to conclude with some crucial points.

A legitimate objection to the proposals would be the fear of excessive bureaucracy and additional expense. Although I accept that point, I am convinced that that would not occur because we already regard the necessity for planning controls in the crucial first stage of any redevelopment activity—the discretionary demolition of a building—as totally normal for a conservation area or a listed building. In other, continental, countries one has to have permission for demolition.

It is crucial that the Bill goes into Committee so that we can discuss the modalities in detail and the procedural planning administration points. If it is organised properly, the implication of having to obtain permission for demolition, dealt with either as part of the substantive planning application in one package, dealt with rapidly at stage one—notwithstanding the fears of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood about vandalism of a site which is left untended for too long and his desire that developers should look after vacant sites—or dealt with at stage 2 of the original planning application for the new buildings, the implication will be that permission for a reasonable development will be much more easily obtainable. The incidence weight and enormous bureaucratic expense of the appeals procedure will thereby be reduced.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Felton and Heston): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I shall give way if I have time. I am watching the clock and trying to make my points. I must be fair to my other hon. Friends. I know my hon. Friend's interest in planning matters and in the legal aspects.

The great weight of bureaucratic expense is now at the other end of the procedure. Appeals are not launched occasionally by developers but as an automatic part of the planning process. Developers know that the local committee of elected councillors will wish, respectably and legitimately, to look after the interests of local residents and electors. To say that that is illegitimate is absurd. Planning applications are often turned down for those reasons. That will not happen under this procedure, whereby the attractions of first stage approval would reverberate right through the process. It would reduce the incidence of unnecessary appeals.

Developers now automatically put in a new plan and appeal before the current appeal—which is automatically applied for—is done away with. They can easily carry the expenses of appeals whereas the local community cannot, because the expenses are usually borne by the local authority.

Mr. Ground: I have followed my hon. Friend's arguments closely as I did those of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). One of the principal fears about the Bill is that a site may be left derelict and unattractive and become a source of vandalism and trespass for a long period. Will my hon. Friend explain how, simply by passing this measure, we do anything to prevent a site from being left vacant and in that condition?

Mr. Dykes: More resources, both human and financial, must be put into planning matters. The Government's planning Bill next autumn will presumably deal with those matters. I know that the process has become unfair and too slow for legitimate applications by legitimate developers, whether individuals, property companies or local authorities applying for a development in another local authority area. The requirement for sites to be properly looked after and husbanded between demolition and redevelopment is already manifest and is made even more so by the proposals. Because a developer will have to obtain permission for demolition, a greater moral and legal responsibility will be placed on the person obtaining permission for demolition in the first stage to proceed with haste to the second stage. Discretion is given to split the process or to deal with it in one package.

I now come to my last two points. I hope that I have not taken up too much time. Others may suggest that there is a recession in property now and that the pressure has gone. They suggest that the boom was merely a temporary manifestation, particularly in the sophisticated, expensive outer-London suburbs, in the south and elsewhere and it did not affect the north. I reject that completely. Even if that were half true at the margin, surely the physical fact of the recession provides an opportunity for us to make this important legislative adjustment. That would be better than waiting for the next boom when it will be too late, whenever that boom may come. When the boom will come is also a matter for fascinating conjecture. Presumably it is mixed up with the equally fascinating argument of when the next general election will be.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood said, the Bill needs to go into Committee. That will be the opportunity for the Minister of State with his legitimate anxieties to come along with his colleagues and his intelligent and highly educated officials and put forward complicated procedural points about administration. That

will be the time for him, as a responsible Minister must do on these occasions, to listen and cater for the anxieties of both Conservative and Opposition Members.

The classic reaction of Governments of all parties has been to regard private Members' Bills as a tedious matter. This is a chance for the Government to show that they are green, imaginative and humane. That is important for the Government. They will also have the chance to show that they respect the will of Parliament.

10.24 am

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am grateful for the opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on his good fortune in the ballot and on introducing this interesting, important and timely measure. My hon. Friend and I have the pleasure of representing neighbouring constituencies. Therefore, we share a common interest in the preservation of the environment in the borough of Hillingdon.

The Bill is timely because it deals with a problem which is becoming steadily more evident and which urgently needs to be addressed. The Bill is useful. It complements the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974, which I had the good fortune to promote as a private Member and which was also supported by the Labour party. I am pleased to hear from the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) that the Labour party supports my hon. Friend's Bill, too.

The Bill deals with the problem of infilling. It also deals with the nasty problem of the gaps which are beginning to appear in streets and crescents throughout urban areas in Greater London, Middlesex and other parts of the country. My attention was drawn to the problem only a month or two ago by a case which arose in my constituency of Uxbridge. It involved a planning application to demolish a house and garage and to erect a two-story building containing five studio flats, several two-bedroomed flats and associated car parking.

The proposed development was strongly resisted by my constituents in Cowley near Uxbridge. They wrote to me drawing my attention to the fact that it was a desirable house which formed part of the character of the area and that they did not wish to see it replaced by a block of flats. When the application went to the planning committee of the borough of Hillingdon, it was refused.

The director of planning for Hillingdon wrote to me:

"The proposal would represent unacceptable over-development of the site which would be detrimental to the character and amenity of the area."

I stress those words because they are important in this case. The would-be developer, a major national insurance company, applied for permission to demolish and to construct a block of flats in place of a much-loved local house. However, there was no reason why that developer had to apply for planning permission.

The director of planning went on to say:

"There was a significant level of objection to the demolition of this house and garage. However, the property is not a listed building nor is it in a conservation area and does not therefore need planning permission for demolition. While it is considered to be an attractive property, it is unlikely that the Department of Environment would agree to list a house of this age and interest."

That raises another important point. In our country are many pleasant houses which are attractive and form part of the neighbourhood. They cannot be listed because many were built in the 1920s, the 1930s, or the 1950s. They are the normal, ordinary kind of houses in which, probably, most hon. Members live. Today, because of the pressure for development in suburban areas, there is a tremendous temptation for some developers—not all by any means—to demolish a property and then to apply for planning permission to construct in place of a single dwelling-house a small block of flats to house five to 10 people.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Does my hon. Friend agree that his concern is already covered by section 58 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971? Under that section, if it appears that a building of special architectural or historic interest is in danger of demolition or alteration, the local planning authority may serve a building preservation notice.

Mr. Shersby: My anxiety is not covered, because the building concerned may not be of special historic or architectural interest—it may simply be an attractive property, which forms part of the urban landscape. When I introduced the Town and Country Amenities Bill in 1974, it had all-party support and it dealt with enhancing conservation areas. During our discussions on it we argued that it is the familiar townscape that for the particular character of our environment and which are at risk when demolition takes place without planning permission.

We are not dealing necessarily with houses of special architectural or historic interest; we are dealing with the ordinary dwelling house, which forms part of a street, crescent or square, whose removal damages the quality of those areas.

Mr. Dykes: It is interesting to reflect that the planning departments of many local authorities are greatly in favour of the proposals in the Bill.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend is right.

There is a gap in the armoury of planning controls, but there has been no attempt to fill it; it has been left to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood to remedy the situation.

Another problem that needs to be addressed is that of back-land development in urban areas. The houses in Ruislip-Northwood, and in Uxbridge, as well as in adjoining constituencies, are either detached or semi-detached and have long gardens of about 240 or 250 feet. They were built in the 1920s or 1930s; I was born and grew up in such a house. Today there is a temptation for some developers to gain access to the attractive back land by acquiring and demolishing those houses, which then enables them to drive a road through and to develop another row of houses on that land.

For many years, decent developers have applied for planning permission to demolish a property, but there is no obligation on them to do so. Consequently, it is open to the cowboy developer to acquire a property, demolish it and then to apply for planning permission for access to the back land. When a local authority planning department is faced with that problem, it is difficult for it to refuse permission, as the house that would have prevented access has already been demolished. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood has drawn attention to that problem, and I strongly endorse what he said. It is something to which the Government should address themselves.

My hon. Friend the Minister represents a pleasant constituency in Worcestershire. I am sure that he is

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familiar with the urban areas of that county as well as with those of greater London and those of other great towns and cities. The threat to the character of the environment lies principally in those areas, because there are some unprincipled developers who will use any tactic to gain access to development land. It is well known that many developers survey an area by helicopter to pick out the patches of green land. They then knock on the doors of my constituents and urge them to sell so that they can gain access. It only takes one or two people to sell for demolition to take place and access to be granted. Once that happens, however, the character of an area is changed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) mentioned houses of special architectural or historic interest, but we are talking about the houses of suburban England and that is why I support the Bill. It is well for the House to remember that, from the 1920s to the 1950s, or even later, many excellent developments were built in and around London, Birmingham, Manchester and many of our other great cities. Those developments are the heritage which people regard as extremely important today. They form the familiar townscape that people want to retain. My constituents, and I am sure those of many of my hon. Friends, do not want to live in a street where the line of the carefully planned development of the 1920s or 1930s is interrupted by a sudden gap—just like a gap in a row of teeth—which is then refilled with a nasty block, an amalgam, of small flats offered to first-time buyers at a large price.

We are dealing not simply with planning control, but with the character of the environment, which our constituents hold dear. I hope that the Government will take careful account of that when deciding how to respond to the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow raised an important point about houses of special architectural or historic interest. One of my relatives lives in a beautiful old lath and plaster house, which is 250 years old. I spoke to him on the telephone last night and he confirmed that his house is not listed. Therefore, it could be demolished unless the planning control to which my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow drew attention was invoked. According to my relative and to others to whom I have spoken, it is not unknown, unfortunately, for old houses to collapse during refurbishment. When that happens, no planning control exercised by the local authority can possibly restore that house.

One house, which was not listed, but was certainly 250 years old, was in the process of restoration when it collapsed during the night. When the local authority officials went to look at it, they found new window frames, new bricks and other materials in the garden all ready for the construction of the new house intended to replace the old property. Strange things can happen to old buildings during the night, and the best planning controls in the world cannot prevent the determined cowboy developer who wants to get hold of a particular site.

I commend the Bill to the House. If there is a Division, I hope that it receives a substantial majority. It will then go into the Committee and we shall have the opportunity to consider in detail some of the planning considerations that will undoubtedly be raised by other colleagues this morning.

10.38 am

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): It is not only a pleasure but an honour to support my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) in the excellent Bill he has introduced. I am not only one of the named sponsors to the Bill, but was a sponsor of two previous Bills introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes).

The Bill is one of the most sensible small measures to be presented to the House in a long time. The more I have studied the issue, the more surprised I am that it has not already been a part of planning legislation. I have read copious amounts on the background information to this Bill, including the Dobry report, which was published in February 1975. It contains virtually no mention of demolition. It was the shorter report, published the year before, which contained some evidence that demolition was a serious problem that should be covered by planning legislation.

In paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood, I should say that, when I was first elected to the constituency of Richmond and Barnes, he was then a resident there, and I was a resident in his constituency of Ruislip-Northwood. I can well remember the joy with which we greeted each other, having given each other a vote in 1983. My hon. Friend still carries the badge that says, "I was one of the 74"—my majority was only 74 in those days. In 1987, we had both moved and he now votes for himself and I vote for myself, but that does not give me a pleasure as great as that when I voted for him. Therefore, I shall vote for him today, should the need arise.

As my hon. Friend knows Richmond so well, he knows the problem as it affects my constituency and he knows that demolition is a scourge and an act of vandalism. It occurs more often than perhaps the Minister would care to say. Avenues have been constructed in this century, such as Kew road, which borders Kew gardens and Castelnau in Barnes which are long, tree-lined avenues that make an attractive town landscape. In Richmond we are lucky: we call it the place where the countryside comes to town. The tree-lined avenues make living in a built-up urban area bearable.

What is so sad is that the harmonious development that created those roads is not just disturbed but ruined by demolition. In my constituency, notable houses in Kew road and Castelnau and many other streets have disappeared almost overnight. Recently, one house in Castelnau was demolished over a weekend. Those are not necessarily conservation areas. I have it on good authority from the planning department at my local council of Richmond-upon-Thames, that many councils create conservation areas specifically to protect buildings from being demolished, when in fact they may not want to create full-blown conservation areas. Councils are doing so when they should not, specifically to protect local residents' houses from impending demolition.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that he required evidence that demolition was causing trouble, but I find that statement strange. One of the major arguments against the Bill is that it would cause massive bureaucracy.

If there is a lot of evidence of demolition, perhaps one would agree that bureaucracy might be created. However, there are not as many examples as might cause a large bureaucracy, but there are sufficient numbers to give rise to grave concern, particularly on the outskirts of London. If I am misinterpreting my hon. Friend's words, no doubt he will take me up later.

I do not believe that we will, as has been said, almost double the number of planning consents that will be required. That is like saying that the number of marriages will be doubled if the bride and groom are counted separately. It does not make sense, because there is no demolition unless there is construction. There should be no reason why a demolition should be allowed if a construction was not following hard on its heels, otherwise, we would have exactly the problems we have heard about, of sites becoming tips.

When I looked at the evidence showing that demolition should be part of planning controls, I found that the argument about whether demolition should constitute development was a fascinating one. It has already been said that there is some legal uncertainty about the matter, and local authorities have typically assumed that demolition is outside the ambit of development control. However, there are extensive powers within planning legislation to prevent the demolition of buildings of historic or architectural quality.

I have already mentioned conservation areas, and the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974 brought the demolition of buildings in conservation areas under control. Therefore, some demolition features in planning control, and it is surprising that the subject is not more comprehensively dealt with in current practice.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend referred to the Act that I promoted in 1974. Is he aware that in that Act I made specific provision so that a local authority could not give itself permission for the demolition of a listed building? That permission could be given only by the Secretary of State so that the right of the local authority to act as judge and jury in its own area was abolished. In promoting that change, I received support from both sides of the House. That was an important move, and it is relevant to the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Hanley: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, I ask his forgiveness for not granting him the parenthood of that Act, which has stood the test of time.

My hon. Friend will no doubt remember that one of the reasons for the Dobry report was parliamentary pressure. There was amazing parliamentary pressure in the early 1970s, which was why George Dobry QC, was asked to produce the report, which has also stood the test of time. He concluded that there were several "persuasive" arguments—I use his word—in favour of subjecting demolition to control. He said that, first,

"there is a good deal of concern that the planning system should permit town centre and residential development that is sometimes strikingly out of scale or sympathy with the area affected."

That is the point that I was making about the tree-lined avenues—that which replaces what has gone can often be out of sympathy and out of scale, and certainly ruin the amenity value of properties for other local residents.

Dobry continued by saying that, secondly, there was "genuine uncertainty" as to the law, which was bad for all of us. He also said, thirdly, that there was "inconsistency". Here, the argument, curiously, is that, although there are powers to control the demolition of certain buildings, there is no overall system. It is unsatisfactory to pick at certain points, rather than deal with the demolition in the round.

He said that, fourthly, and most importantly, there are the four practical reasons to extend control over demolition. My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood mentioned three of them. Dobry spoke of the aftermath of demolition and described graphically the inadequately fenced barren sites and the dumping grounds that we have all seen on those sites. The Dobry report mentioned the broken bottles, dumped cars and paraphernalia of vandalism and disorder—an excellent description. My hon. Friend also mentioned one of Dobry's conclusions, that demolition, as a fait accompli, cannot be allowed.

Developers have a slightly dirty name; perhaps that is sometimes deserved, but not all developers are professionals. A developer can be a person who has bought a house in, say Barnes or Kew, and has decided that he wants to pull down what was perhaps a desirable residence in the 1920s and make it into what is regarded as a modern desirable property. A developer can be an ordinary person who is possibly overstretched on his loans and suffering from high rates of interest. He wants to get the job done quickly, so that the loans are not outstanding for too long. He may very well want to sell and move on soon after he has built what he may claim to local residents is his dream house.

The developer may have put in four, five or six planning applications. They may have been turned down by the local council. Certainly many local councils turn down such applications; people then appeal to the Secretary of State. Local councillors may not want to take the political risk of accepting a planning application, so they pass the buck to the Secretary of State and the independent inspectors appointed by him.

The developer whose five or six applications have been turned down may have been frustrated by a local council which, after all, is trying to act in the interests of local residents. But the developer knows full well that, once he has pulled down a property, the local council will be more likely to accept one of his plans, because it is better to have something in place than nothing. The fait accompli argument is a powerful one and it applies most frequently in my constituency—people pull down properties because then the council has to accept development, rather than refuse what might be regarded as reasonable or minor improvements or alterations to a property.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does my hon. Friend accept that that result might be achieved in another way, even if this Bill were passed? A developer applies for planning permission to build a house on the basis of very low density, then demolishes the house on the site and fails to build the house that he has applied for planning permission to build.

Mr. Hanley: I do not claim that the Bill will make all demolition and planning legislation perfect. I agree that some people may fail to develop a site after demolition, but I also believe that the Government have a duty to deal with waste land, private or public. We know that the Government are taking great steps to reduce the area of derelict land under their control and to try to encourage local authorities to use derelict land that is under their

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control. Recently, a number of orders have required local authorities to use derelict land. I see no reason on earth why a local council cannot be given permission to take over land after demolition if it remains derelict for an excessively long time.

The point remains that assurances would have been given in the application for demolition in the first place. The local authority could then use those assurances compulsorily to purchase the site, if necessary. As I said, the fait accompli problem caused by demolition is the one that affects my constituency most—the developer who puts a gun at the head of the planning department.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood also talked about premature demolition of houses and vacancies in residential accommodation in anticipation of development, which causes disquiet among local people. That can help to spread blight, but there is, as Dobry said, a need to preserve commercial and community use, and the premature demolition of shops in a redevelopment area is clearly harmful to the local economy and amenities.

Many people believe that preventing the demolition of useful residential buildings, theatres and cinemas is equally important. There is such a head of steam behind this issue that I am surprised that the Government give every sign of being unwilling to accept this memorable little Bill.

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that it was a Conservative Government who commissioned the Dobry report, at a time when the property market was booming. By the time the report was completed, the property boom had collapsed and a Labour Government were in power. They published their proposals for what they called community land legislation. Cullingworth's "Town and Country Planning In Britain" an excellent tome that I invite all my right hon. and hon. Friends to read, says:

"In short, the planning scene had changed fundamentally. In purely administrative terms, 'authorities concerned with distinguishing between applications for exempt development, excepted development designated relevant development, and non-designated relevant development could not also be expected to distinguish between class A and class B applications, and between outline illustrative, detailed and guideline applications'."

Government decisions on the Dobry report were set out in their circular in 1975 and all the recommendations for change in the system were rejected—even though it was stressed that the objectives could be achieved if local authorities adopted what was called "the most efficient working methods".

Dobry's view was that it is not so much the system that is wrong as the way in which it is used. That was endorsed by the Government—even though they rejected many of the recommendations—who commended the report

"to students of our planning system as an invaluable compendium of information about the working of the existing development control process, and to local authorities and developers as a source of advice on the best way to operate within it."

So Dobry had it right; but a Labour Government were responsible for its rejection and now, ironically, a different Government have rejected the excellent legislation proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East on two occasions.

I have set out as comprehensively as I can the real problem that affects my constituency and others. It is not a vast problem: there are not masses of demolitions, but when they happen they can take place in extremely sensitive places and greatly affect local people.

There is no logic in allowing a person under our planning laws not to make a planning application to alter a property by less than 10 per cent. when we also allow a person not to make a planning application when he alters his property by 100 per cent.—by pulling it down. Where is the logic in making a person put in a planning application if he alters his house by between 100 per cent. and 10 per cent., but not if he alters it by less than 10 per cent. or by more than 100 per cent? The entire removal of a property presents the strongest possible need for an application for development.

Planning applications are required by law, because planning affects other local people besides the person altering the property. We have planning applications because we recognise local concerns about the environment. It is therefore ridiculous that no planning application is necessary when a person pulls a whole property down. I recommend this excellent Bill to the House.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask your guidance as to whether the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has said that he intends to come to the House this morning to make a statement on the House of Fraser affair. I would not ask such a question on a Friday were it not for the devious behaviour of the Secretary of State yesterday, when he announced that the Serious Fraud Office would not be prosecuting but he will have failed to provide until next Wednesday the report on which that decision was partially based.

May I ask, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, if we do not have a statement today, we shall at least have one next Wednesday, because this is a Westland-type affair in which both the honesty and integrity of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and the Prime Minister have been called into question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have had no application for a statement to be made, but no doubt what has been said will have been heard by the Patronage Secretary who is in his place.

10.59 am

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I welcome this short Bill, which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and which is supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). They expressed the hope that the Government will accept the Bill as a touchstone of the Government's concern for the environment.

In the opinion polls one looks for issues about which people are concerned and finds that they are concerned about this issue. I have no worries about the next general election, but I hope that before the time comes the Government will remember what people are thinking about. They are thinking about the preservation of the environment, and not just the green environment, smokeless zones and the burning of old boots, but about people having decent places in which to live. Such matters

will influence how people will vote. I shall be shocked and horrified if the Government do not accept this Bill with acclaim, because it will reduce much suffering.

It is amazing that houses can be knocked down without permission. I do not know how anybody could oppose the Bill because it is such obvious common sense. Houses are part of Britain's social capital. They cost tens of thousands or hundreds or thousands to build and before they are knocked down a decision should be made that something better should replace them. If such a decision is not made, the houses should be left alone. We do not want the whole of Britain being made into a conservation area, but if that would stop such demolition I should even go that far.

As my hon. Friends have said, buildings are usually knocked down and replaced by something that will make more profit more quickly. That usually means that good family houses are demolished and generations of families are broken. The houses are replaced by tiny flats, reminiscent of a doll's house society, with window boxes the only place where there is anything growing. We call this the century of improvement, but people in the next century will laugh at us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has left the Chamber. I live in his constituency and he and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East know that three houses from where I live a big old house was knocked down for redevelopment. A planning application was turned down by the council and was passed to the Department. In one of its wiser moods the Department turned it down. Although we cannot always rely on the Department being wise——

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall give way in a moment when I have finished my sentence, otherwise I shall forget where I have got to.

The application was turned down by the council for the second time. The matter was spread over five or six years and it cost local residents thousands of pounds to fight the issue. The council in Harrow is Conservative, but this is a problem with all parties. Permission has now been given by the Council for a block of flats, which will change the whole area. The effect will be like leprosy and good houses in which family after family have been brought up will be replaced by tiny boxes. I trust that the Bill will have all-party support.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) referred, is a sponsor of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) is unable to speak to the Bill because he assists the Minister.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I felt that I was speaking for my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and I am sure that he would have endorsed what I have said. I am sure that the Minister will be delighted that his Parliamentary Private Secretary has been assisted in that way. I thought that it was my duty to involve him in everything that I said, and I am sorry that he was not here to acclaim the phrases that I used.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East knows about big store development, which is a menance. Superstores should be outside cities. They should not be near main roads where traffic is held up, and should not involve knocking down good houses. The Kenton road bridges my constituency and the constituency of Harrow, East. One of the great store firms has been trying to build a superstore here and that will mean the demolition of superb houses. It will also mean that traffic will not be able to move and people will be playing chess on the way to work. Traffic on the Kenton road does not move now for three hours in the morning and for three hours at night. People will soon have to leave for work at 2 am or go by parachute or helicopter.

The plans were called in by the Department, whose prayers were answered by the Almighty in the right way, because the plans were turned down. They were turned down a second time by the council, but now the store firm is trying for a third time and is buying up houses. About 20 or 30 three and four-bedroon houses, the basis of family life, have been bought. They were built in the 1930s and 1940s and would normally last longer than some houses that are being built today. I am not saying that they will be knocked down, but I suspect that that will happen because the houses are being bought up at above the market price. A road could be built there and perhaps one could get through on a bicycle on a good day. The houses could be knocked down at any time and more family houses will have gone.

The Bill is long overdue. I am pleased to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West has arrived. I referred to certain events in his constituency and he would have supported me with acclaim if he had been here. I know that he will regret for the rest of his life that he was not here.

I hope that next year we shall see a consolidation measure for planning. That is desperately needed and if the Government want to revive themselves—and I should like to see some resuscitation from time to time—such an environment measure would help tremendously and would show that at last some sense is coming back to us. I have the greatest respect for the Minister and I trust that at the end of the debate I shall respect him even more, because I hope that he will assure us that if the Bill does not go through, the Government will deal with three other matters. It would be nice to hear what a consolidation Bill will contain.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) spoke about appeals. At present there is no natural justice on appeals. A developer can appeal, but people who live in an area and whose environment will be destroyed cannot. There should be an appeal system against developers. The system should work both ways and natural justice is long overdue. Secondly, no one should be able to apply for planning permission unless he owns the houses that will be affected or has written permission from the people who live in them.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Hear, hear.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: My hon. Friend took me by surprise with his naval "Hear, hear". Only we two who were in the Navy are able to recognise the strength of that acclamation. I am glad that I did not serve under my hon. Friend because I would have been afeard at such a fierce turn of phrase. I am grateful for his support.

Blackmail comes into this matter. People buy houses and apply for planning permission. They then say to a little lady that she will be the only one left and had better sell. I know of a case where permission was sought for

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development affecting 700 houses and the prospective developer dd not own one of them. Even the lampposts had signs on them. Hundreds of people living there were terrified because they felt that somehow they were being threatened.

My final point concerns the preservation of the green belt of suburbia. Green belts in the countryside are all very well, but most people do not have the time to enjoy them. They want to enjoy the green belt that is provided by their gardens, rather than suffer back-garden development. The same applies in respect of playing fields and public open spaces. Two are currently under threat in my own constituency, including Westfield college sports field. In my constituency, sports field after sports field has disappeared, so less sport will be played in the future than in the past. Fortunately, the plan concerning the one now under threat has been called in by the Department of the Environment. Although I cannot influence its decision, I may say that it is greatly desired by my constituents that both applications should be rejected and that the two sports fields be kept open.

As to back-garden development, reference has been made to the use of helicopters in photographing potential development sites. A man knocked on my door offering me an aerial photograph of my house. He explained that a helicopter had been used to fly over the area to identify potential development sites, and thought that I should like to buy a copy of the photograph. I did not know what to do with him. Was one to attack him, have him arrested, or reward him for his initiative? I was amazed that he had the effrontery not only to assist in destroying my neighbourhood but to try to sell me copies of his photographs as well.

I do not suggest that the Bill can deal with such a situation, but the problem of back-garden development certainly exists in my constituency—particularly in Tudor gardens, about which I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister again only this week. The Bill itself, the size of the attendance by my hon. Friends, and the support of the hon. Member for Normanton show the amount of public concern for environmental protection. It is wrong that houses can be so easily knocked down. The existing appeals system is also wrong.

I look forward to the Bill receiving its Second Reading, and to receiving an assurance from my hon. Friend the Minister that the Bills for consideration next Session will include one that covers the right of appeal by the public against development, the obtaining of written consent from the owners of all the houses involved in a development before a planning application is made, and additional measures to guard against back-garden and playing field development. I entirely support the Bill.

11.12 am

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I declare an interest, in that I have been practising at the planning Bar for more than 20 years. The Bill will undoubtedly give rise to many planning appeals, which will no doubt be very beneficial to the planning Bar. Therefore, I have a clear interest in favour of the passing of the Bill.

I have a number of reservations about the Bill as drafted, and suggest that a number of its aspects require further thought. I acknowledge the popular concern, to which my hon. Friends have referred, relating to the demolition of large houses with large gardens and their replacement by developments of an over-high density that are inappropriate to the surrounding area and very often contrary to the provisions of the local plan and development plan. Such concern is widespread in the constituency that I represent and that in which I live. There is a need for policy consideration and a strong case for more intervention by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in local plans and the implementation of planning controls.

Local authorities are often to blame for developments that take place on their own land, which aspect requires even more urgent consideration. I wholly support the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) about sports fields and gardens. The erosion of sports and public open spaces, and of private open spaces, in London—particularly west London—is a matter of considerable concern that ought to be occupying the attention of the Department of the Environment. It is no accident that the existing legislation is as it is, and that there is an absence of any controls on demolition other than where it constitutes an engineering operation, or where the building is listed or is in a conservation area. The absence of any controls where no engineering operation is involved dates from the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, which was passed by the post-war Labour Government.

During the debate, my hon. Friends referred to a number of sound Conservative principles, but I suggest that a number of sound Conservative principles were enacted by the post-war Labour Government—such as the assumption that an owner should be free to do as he wishes with his property and should be allowed to do so, provided that it is not objectionable on grounds of land use or planning policy. That is a key principle in current legislation, which relies on the premise that the self-interest of the landowner is not to keep his land empty and non-productive and that there will be a strong motivation for him to develop it whenever that is possible.

One must question whether such a Bill is really needed. Would its objectives be better achieved by the use of existing powers or by modifying existing policies? Should we not be careful about imposing more controls than are needed? Any new controls should also be certain of achieving their stated purpose.

The principal objective of the Bill that I discern from the speeches of my hon. Friends is that of preventing sympathetic buildings, often located in large gardens, from being demolished when the sites are either likely to be left derelict for some time and become an eyesore, or be replaced by a development that is out of keeping with the area or at too high a density—or perhaps both.

If the Bill is passed, on what criteria would permission to demolish be given or withheld? One is talking of houses that are not of special architectural or historical interest or in a conservation area.

Mr. Wilkinson: But my hon. and learned Friend will agree that they are nice to live in, and that the people who do so appreciate them.

Mr. Ground: Permission to demolish such properties cannot be refused on the grounds of historical or architectural interest. Perhaps such properties should be in

a conservation area, but by definition they are not, so the matters that could be relied on to prevent or to restrict redevelopment in a conservation area are not applicable.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Given my hon. and learned Friend's considerable expertise, I am listening to him with much interest. Is he saying that, even if the Bill were passed, there would be no planning grounds to refuse permission to demolish a house that was neither listed nor in a conservation area?

Mr. Ground: I am not saying that there would be no grounds; I am asking the House to consider what the grounds would be for refusing consent. My hon. Friends have assumed that planning permission for redevelopment or for new building on such a site would be forthcoming from the planning authority or from the Secretary of State. If planning permission were forthcoming from the local authority, under existing practice there could be no justifiable planning reason for refusing consent. If consent were refused by the local authority, under existing law and practice the Secretary of State may make an order for costs against it.

Our current practice may need revision, and perhaps the fact that a house is nice to live in should be incorporated in legislation, but without the introduction of some new concept, I can see no valid reason for refusing planning consent.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. and learned Friend explain why in certain residential areas, in which there are neither listed buildings nor conservation areas, permission must be requested to cut down trees on which preservation orders have been placed, yet houses require no such permission to be demolished? I find that perplexing. Will my hon. and learned Friend turn his legal mind to that?

Mr. Ground: I should not wish to detain the House with an exposition on tree preservation orders, but the planning policy in the local plan could encourage the retention of existing housing and discourage its replacement by new housing.

For buildings developed some years ago, which have generous accommodation and space and which, although not of historic interest or in a conservation area, are valuable and should be retained, it is perfectly possible to achieve that end under local planning policy, which should be strong enough, if attacked on appeal, to prevent the granting of planning permission. That would be an effective remedy to achieve my hon. Friend's objective, but the simple requirement to obtain planning permission for demolition without a change of policy, would not do so.

The Bill would be ineffective in reducing the risk of dereliction. The planning Acts contain no positive measures to compel a developer to proceed with a development. If he is required to obtain planning permission before being allowed to demolish, there is nothing to prevent him from applying for another planning permission, because there is no limit on the number of planning permissions that can validly exist for a site. The freedom to carry out any one of those developments is in the hands of the developer, provided he has not lost the benefit of one of the planning permissions by taking some thoroughly inconsistent step that makes them impossible to implement.

I do not believe that the Bill would achieve the objective of reducing dereliction, and it may impose an additional bureaucratic requirement, which could add to the period required for redevelopment. Instead of leaving a site derelict, it could lead to properties being left empty while permission was sought.

From my experience as a resident and as a Member, I am sympathetic to the objectives of the Bill. I should like to see them achieved by local and, if necessary, national policy changes. But I doubt the wisdom of making that additional requirement without corresponding changes in law and practice to make it effective.

11.26 am

Mr. Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): The speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) was important, because it raised for the first time some of the Bill's practical implications.

I am very sympathetic—I may go so far as to say extremely sympathetic—to the concept that led my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Dykes) and for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) to introduce the Bill, and I congratulate them on doing so. There is no doubt that the random demolition of buildings has caused many difficulties—not only for the environment but for transport and many other things in urban areas.

With the exception of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), hon. Members who have spoken represent London constituencies or constituencies close to London. I should like to make a few comments as someone who represents what is basically a rural area. North Hertfordshire is between 30 and 50 miles from London, but it is sufficiently far away not to be affected by the same considerations as those raised by my hon. Friends.

My constituency covers about 150 square miles, and there are four separate towns—one ancient market town of some size, Hitchin, two smaller towns, Baldock and Royston, and Letchworth, the first garden city in the world. The planning considerations that affect them are very different for each. They are also rather different from the planning considerations that affect the London area, about which we have heard so far.

I want to consider the practical implications in the planning process and the redevelopment process in those areas of my constituency if the Bill were to reach the statute book. I am open-minded at this stage, but I am a bit sceptical about the practical implications of the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to give us more insight into the Government's thinking and into what legislation may be in train which, whatever the fate of the Bill, may incorporate some recognition of the need to tackle the problems caused by demolition and by the relative lack of control over demolition at present.

The most difficult question is what is the interest of the community, as represented by the planning authority, as opposed to the interest of the current and future occupants of the properties concerned. I was interested in the comments of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston about which factors would be taken into account in considering the demolition aspects of planning permission under such a system. I have three main areas of concern, and I hope that, later in the debate, some light may be thrown on them.

I comment in passing—this is no reflection on the Chair—that it is in some ways a pity to have so many

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

contributions from sponsors of the Bill coming first, because fewer of them are left to respond to the queries and concerns of other hon. Members.

I have listened carefully to earlier contributions. There are some gaps in the argument for the Bill, which is in a rather bare form. One could argue that, by adding many new clauses and accompanying the Bill with a considerable back-up of guidance or regulation about the way in which such a system will work, one could formulate a new system which would enable planning procedures to cover demolition as effectively as building. However, I must confess, without having any grudge against the Bill—I have some enthusiasm for the underlying idea that demolition has now become a considerable problem which needs attention—that I am not convinced by the arguments I have heard this morning that its aims could be achieved.

My first point is not my main one. As some of my hon. Friends have already said, we should not lose sight of the fact that local authorities are not necessarily reliable in their opinion of what should or should not be demolished. Part of my early political experience was working in the borough of Lewisham, and the first constituency that I contested at a general election was Hammersmith, North. In both cases, the local authorities committed widespread demolition of what would now be regarded as very attractive houses which were built perhaps 100 years ago. Many were in need of modernisation and perhaps some extension, but their demolition has left great areas in those boroughs deprived of older-fashioned housing of a type that is now more popular.

The boroughs replaced those houses with some monstrosities. Tower blocks not only generate terrific winds but provide no suitable play areas equivalent to the gardens which the houses used to have. People who live on the upper floors, especially those with young families, have a difficult and hazardous occupation.

I remind the House of that episode, which happened mainly in the 1960s, to point out that one cannot assume automatically that local authorities possess a reliable wisdom about which areas of urban landscape can be done away with and replaced by some residential or other building. Abuse by local authorities can manifest itself in other ways.

I have the misfortune to represent a constituency that has Stevenage on its borders. About 20 years ago, Stevenage was within the constituency, but it grew so fast that it had to be taken out when the boundaries were redrawn. It is a great post-war new town and is laid out on such extravagant lines that there is a vast amount of wasted space for accommodation and other building within its boundaries. Yet the borough council has relentlessly refused to encourage infilling and development within its boundaries.

To my astonishment and dismay, it has succeeded in persuading the Secretary of State that its requirement for extra housing should be achieved by pushing out its boundaries. It is already far too big geographically for an urban area in the middle of one of the home counties. The solution has been that its boundaries should be developed further, and they are creeping into my constituency, although there is a great deal of wasted space within Stevenage. That is a direct result of the planning policy of Stevenage borough council, in which I have no confidence.

I will forbear pointing out to hon. Members the political complexion of Stevenage borough council, because it is possible that councils of other political complexions may have ideas about the way in which the locality should develop which are unacceptable in the long term, which may conflict strongly with the individual views of people who live in or near that area and which may not take their interests properly into account. It is an important, although not a central, point that we should recognise that planning authorities will not necessarily operate in the long-term interests of people in the area on demolition and reconstruction.

My second point is more important and serious. Will a procedure such as that in the Bill slow down what is already a rather arthritic process? Planning applications are considered by planning officers, then by planning sub-committees and then by the whole council, after which they may go to appeal. The system is already pretty protracted. In my constituency, there has been considerable pressure for extra accommodation. One cause is that the whole planning process takes a long time to complete. We must accept that, with the population pressures in the south-east, further dwelling units—a horrible phrase, but it is the jargon—must be provided on a considerable scale. Figures from the Department of the Environment show that, in the last 14 years of the century, there will be almost 1 million extra households in the south-east.

The reason is not that people are moving in from other parts of the country. Indeed, people are tending to move out of the area, which is not surprising in view of house prices. The reason is that family units are becoming smaller, and that people are getting married younger and wanting to be in their own accommodation. People want to live near their families and in the area in which they were brought up, so there is a need for more units than there were before. That can be achieved only by increased density, by expanding the boundaries of urban areas or, in some cases, by replacing older accommodation with new accommodation which contains more separate units.

There is a strong economic and social motivation—which, in itself, is not objectionable—for replacing some larger, older properties with new, more separate accommodation units. That is happening in, for instance, Hitchin, Baldock and Royston. In my area, the problem has been dealt with partly through expansion of the areas over which development is carried out and partly through some infilling, but also through the replacement of older properties. I fear that the Bill could slow down the process.

That leads me to my third major worry, which reflects what my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) has said. If I were a member of the relevant sub-committee of North Hertfordshire district council, or of the planning officer's department, I am not sure what recomendation I could possibly make for or against the demolition of specific buildings: surely I would not have to say, "It is perfectly acceptable to knock down any or all of the houses in Acacia avenue, but none must be knocked down in Willow crescent."

One of my hon. Friends observed earlier that a homogeneous row of houses, of uniform and attractive appearance, would become very unattractive if a gaping hole suddenly appeared because one of the houses had been knocked down to be replaced by a building

containing perhaps half a dozen flats. None of the Bill's sponsors, and none of those who have spoken most passionately in its favour, has addressed the further question of how to devise a remotely fair or reasonable system for deciding which property should receive such treatment.

The present presumption is that development may take place provided that it conforms to the existing criteria, which include the local plan and requirements relating to access, traffic, density and infrastructure. Clearly the criteria will be heavily influenced by the supply, or lack of supply, of housing in the area; they will also take into account such matters as design and aesthetics, although not to any major extent.

The argument advanced this morning, however, is based principally on less tangible factors such as appearance and the general environmental impact on a particular collection of houses built in a certain period and style. Of course residents will become used to the appearance of a locality: some of the towns and villages in my constituency are very attractive, and I would be the last to want them to change. It is, however, exceptionally difficult to quantify or codify such factors in a form that would operate effectively in the appeal system and would enable councils to deal fairly and consistently with the collective interests of local people.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does my hon. Friend envisage a two-tier system whereby some buildings, although not considered to possess enough intrinsic merit to warrant their being listed or forming part of a conservation area, would nevertheless be refused demolition, for no obvious reason?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend must be a mind-reader: I was coming to that point. We already have procedures to allow the listing of individual buildings, and the designation of groups of buildings as a conservation area. The Bill, I believe, would create, if not a universal urban listed-building or conservation-area designation, at least the presumption of a third tier, which could be invoked to prevent or discourage development that could only lead to demolition.

Mr. Ground: Is my hon. Friend aware that an informal third category already exists in a number of areas? It is variously described, but is sometimes referred to as "buildings of townscape value".

Mr. Stewart: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his helpful intervention. It seems to me almost inevitable that such a concept will develop if the Bill is enacted, and arguably it should do so regardless. My constituents seem much more concerned about planning applications nowadays: they worry not only about what may appear on a particular site, but about the possible loss of what they regard as an attractive prospect or a social amenity.

It would be dangerous to enact such legislation without a much clearer idea of how it will work in practice, and whether the presumptions about demolition and development will change. The argument that demolition would in itself damage or remove a building or buildings of aesthetic value or general public amenity could act as a focus for those opposed to all development: it could be used not for the purpose that lies behind the Bill, but as an obstruction to development that is, as far as I can see, unavoidable in my constituency and those of a number of London Members.

I say that not because I am an expert on planning, but merely because, like all hon. Members, I receive a good deal of constituency feedback on planning matters, both from those who want more accommodation built to ease the housing pressure and from those who oppose a change in the appearance of their locality. I suspect—although I am willing to be disabused—that, if the legislation were enforced without careful consideration of the criteria for and against demolition, planning permission procedures would be much lengthier and more complicated, and also more difficult to implement.

We would also become confused about the purpose of a restriction on demolition. I do not want to finish on a carping note, nor do I disagree with the Bill's principle. I do not believe that wanton and random demolition, often in the worst interests of commercial development, should be allowed to continue. We must achieve greater control over such demolition. However, I believe that the issues are not nearly as straightforward as they appear in this two clause Bill.

I want to end with a point which might apply whether or not demolition is addressed by his Bill or in any other way, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will consider this. I have been struck by the difficulties facing pedestrians, traffic and the general public as a result of the redevelopment of urban sites.

Many traffic delays occur because people park in the wrong places and often because of natural congestion. However, many of the problems are caused by the intolerable intrusion on to our highways of work around building sites, where land is fenced off and lorries may be parked in inconvenient places. What constraints exist on people who want to demolish and redevelop property? What costs must they bear to compensate for the nuisance to the immediate local community and for the vast amount of man hours that are wasted as a result of traffic delays? I hope that that factor will weigh more strongly in decisions to allow demolition to replace buildings, particularly in the most crowded areas of our towns and cities.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood for giving us this opportunity to discuss a very important matter. Whatever happens to this Bill, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues in the Department of the Environment will take seriously the concerns that have been expressed by all hon. Members about the potential abuses in demolition, however best my colleagues decide to resolve the problems.

11.52 am

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): There is a common feeling in the House today that we all accept the need for a measure to stop the capricious demolition of houses by people who do that for reasons that are not in the interests of the local community. However, the Bill highlights wider problems than those that it attempts to address directly. It raises problems in our planning laws, which are long overdue for review and perhaps systematic reform. There are many abuses of the planning system, in addition to that described in the Bill.

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

We have heard some very well argued and cogent reasons why the Bill may be technically flawed. However, we must consider reasons, which may not be within the legal framework, why buildings are demolished prior to the granting of planning permission for their replacement. We must consider why that happens, because if we understand the reasons we shall be better able to tackle the problem.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the description of the Bill as technically flawed in its present form on Second Reading is not correct because it is quite normal for private Member's Bills and others to have additional technical clauses drafted to them in Committee to take care of the technicalities? The Bill has a positive advantage in that it is a two-clause Bill with a basic principle built into it.

Mr. Carrington: I agree with much of that. However, the point has been made cogently that the problem ranges wider than the issue addressed in the Bill. Consequently, the knock-on effects—for want of a better description—of the changes that the Bill would introduce into the planning system must be considered when we take account of the necessary legislative changes. Obviously the Bill can be amended in Committee to address those problems, but the problems are substantial.

I want now to consider the reasons why buildings are demolished prior to the granting of planning permission. No one who owns a building would want to demolish it and leave the site vacant and not producing an income. No one would want investment in a property to become a hole in which to sink more money instead of something that might produce income or serve as a home. It is very unlikely that it will be in the interests of a developer—for want of a better expression—to knock down a building prior to having an alternative use for that site with which he or she proposes to go ahead.

Our present planning laws create circumstances in which it is in the interests of developers to demolish property without prior planning permission. Many of the reasons for that arise largely from frustrations with the planning system.

There are delays in the planning system at present. If one makes an application to develop a site in most of the London boroughs—and certainly in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham—that planning permission may take up to six months to reach the first stage in the process. One also faces the expectation that the local planning decision will be taken for reasons that may be seen as capricious. It may not be taken for reasons that are designed purely to reflect the planning needs of the site.

That leads to an automatic appeals process straight to the Department of the Environmnt. That process is supposed to protect both sides, to ensure that local decisions are taken in the interests of the community and in the interests of the developer. However, I believe that there are serious problems with the appeals process at the DOE. A specialist inspector makes a career of sitting on planning inquiries, either public inquiries or written-in inquiries. He will take evidence and then make a decision.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend said that the appeals process is intended to protect both sides. Does he accept that there is no appeal against the granting of planning permission, but there is appeal only against its refusal?

Mr. Carrington: I agree with my hon. Friend and I intended to consider that point later.

We are seeing increasing abuses of the planning system by local authorities, which grant themselves planning permission on their own sites for developments that are considerably in excess of any that they would grant for a third party. The objectors cannot appeal against the council granting its own planning permission. That is the greatest abuse of the lack of appeal once planning permission has been granted.

I believe that the inspector's role is inherently unsatisfactory. An inspector may or may not take a decision based upon an objective view of the evidence. No doubt he will take a decision that is strictly in accordance with the legal requirements. However, as in any planning decision, a considerable amount of subjective evidence must be assessed by the inspector. On legal grounds, his decision could go either way. All hon. Members have seen examples in their constituencies of when an inspector's decision was controversial and reflected his own prejudices.

We have a somewhat capricious appeals system that does not work satisfactorily. It was never intended to work in that way. Certainly, in many London areas, it is effectively a planning process of first call. Having waited for their statutory eight weeks, developers will automatically appeal. Instead of a local authority bringing local considerations to bear on planning applications, it will now consider automatically opposing an appeal to the inspector. The inspector effectively takes the decision of first call in any planning application. That system is inherently unsatisfactory, and the appeals system was never designed to cope effectively, nor does it cope effectively.

Developers end up with considerable frustration with the planning system, and that leads to the demolition of buildings. It forces a decision on to the planning process. The local authority and the inspector are forced into a decision when a site causes considerable local aggravation because it is an eyesore, because it is being squatted on by people in caravans, or purely because of weeds. That produces pressure for the granting of planning permission, which would not otherwise exist.

There is another effect on developers. In inner London, developers increasingly find themselves subject to a section 52 agreement—especially in respect of large developments—to provide what is somewhat laughingly called planning gain to the community for a development. In principle, there is nothing wrong with a section 52 agreement. In practice, a local authority often sells planning permission to a developer in return for what is perceived to be an asset, whether in the form of cash or housing built elsewhere in the community. The local authority grants planning permission that it would not otherwise have granted, and the process rapidly becomes an abuse of the planning system. Developers will resist a section 52 agreement by applying any pressure that they can. By pre-emptive demolition of an existing building, they strengthen their own hand when negotiating their section

52 agreements. The other reason for demolition, which I suspect applies in particular to well-established urban areas, is pre-emptive strike against the listing of a building.

For a great many buildings in this country—fortunately, fewer since we reviewed the statutory lists of buildings of historical interest—if they had been brought to the attention of the authorities in time, they would unquestionably have been listed. If they were not listed when initially brought to the attention of the authorities, given enough time and the changing perceptions of the desirability of retaining buildings, they would be listed then. Ten years ago, there was a perception that buildings that were built in the 1930s were only occasionally of a sufficient quality to be listed. There is now a growing conviction in conservation and architectural circles that many buildings from the 1930s should be statutorily listed—far more than have been statutorily listed. There are now more listed buildings from the 1950s than anyone who was brought up at that time would reasonably consider possible. There are fashion changes in listing requirements.

There will always be gaps in statutory listing, which can be filled only when the gaps are pointed out. A gap is frequently pointed out when there is an application to redevelop a building. The developer, knowing full well that there is a possibility that the building that he wishes to demolish will be statutorily listed, will pre-emptively demolish the building overnight. Some spectacular examples have hit the national press—for example, the Hoover building on the Great West road some years ago, and Kensington town hall about seven years ago. Many smaller examples do not fit into the same category. The problem can be tackled by establishing conservation areas. However, it must be recognised that many buildings are inherently desirable, but they are not in places where we would wish to create conservation areas. They may be isolated within a modern development or they may be in a shopping area where one would not wish to go through all the necessary planning problems that are inherent in a conservation area. There is no doubt that there is a strong case for controlling the demolition of buildings prior to planning permission being granted.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend spoke about the Hoover building and Kensington town hall. I was a local councillor in Kensington and I was vaguely involved in the demolition of the building. Does my hon. Friend accept that the Bill would not address those buildings because it refers only to dwelling houses?

Mr. Carrington: I certainly recognise that point. That is one reason why I expressed concern about the extent of the Bill. I used those two examples to illustrate a well-publicised facet of the problem with dwelling houses. Many dwelling houses have the same statutory problems. I do not criticise the demolition of Kensington town hall—there were good reasons for it. I have been a long-standing resident of the borough of Kensington and Chelsea and I am well aware of the problems that existed. There was a strong argument that the potential listing of Kensington town hall was done by the Greater London Council for reasons other than conservation. That is another matter. The fact remains that the demolition was done to avoid statutory listing.

Mr. Ground: Does my hon. Friend's answer mean that, in principle, he would support consent being required for the demolition of any building? What is the basis for confining protection to residential purposes? As he has pointed out, commercial buildings often occupy large areas and give rise to large-scale problems.

Mr. Carrington: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. It is unreal in planning regulations to make a pernicious distinction between domestic dwellings and commercial developments. The attraction of a building to a community lies in its design and nature, not in the use to which it is put. In other words, an attractive, well-designed and historically interesting building could have a variety of uses within its lifetime. We have only to look at the uses to which redundant churches are put to see how true that can be. A building can start as an ecclesiastical building, become a domestic dwelling, and end up as an office block, all within the lifetime of the same structure. The same artistic and conservation problems are inherent in such a building, although the different pressures to allow change of use may be inherent in the use of the building rather than in its architectural design.

The problem is how to achieve the necessary control. We can end up with a situation in which the undoubted rights of a property owner to enjoy his property free from any outside constraint are completely out of balance with his neighbours' rights to maintain the amenity of their properties. We must achieve a balance in planning law between the rights of the person who owns the property to enjoy that property and the rights of the local community, including the neighbours or, increasingly, the rights of the rest of the community, to preserve the overall aspect of their area. In urban planning terms, that can mean a community's right to maintain the streetscape. That is an important balance.

There are several basic problems with the Bill. One is that an appeal process would have to be allowed for any application to demolish that is not connected to an application to redevelop. Obviously, an appeal process would present difficulties because a local authority could refuse an application in the knowledge that the appeal process could be so stretched out as to make any reasonable application to demolish a useless tool for the developer who could not then make proper use of his own land. Therefore, in my view, if after a certain period—perhaps just a few weeks—no objection about the demolition was made to the local authority permission to demolish should be deemed to have been granted. That would mean that permission could not be withheld without an extremely good reason.

We must also find means of stopping the unreasonable delays in the planning process. I cannot believe that we should willingly add the problems of an appeal on the application process to the burdens that the planners or the local authorities already face without addressing the reasons for those great delays. The local authorities and the appeal process must be required to ensure that planning permission is granted within a reasonable time.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the Bill, which fills a great gap in our planning laws. However, it is just one aspect of the now absolutely necessary overall review of our planning laws. We must urgently address the conflict relating to the powers of the local planners, granted by the Department of the Environment which, as I mentioned when discussing the role of inspectors and the appeal processes, have now got out of line. The use of the section 52 agreement is now a major scandal, which also needs to be addressed urgently. As my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Carrington]

Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) said, there is a great problem with the objector's right to appeal on a planning permission that has been granted by a council, especially in relation to its own land.

I hope that the Bill progresses further today. However, if it does not manage to achieve its Second Reading today —for whatever reason—I hope that the Government will bear in mind the very real problems that it attempts to address and that in the new planning Bill, which is being trailed for the next Session, they will ensure that those problems are corrected. I hope that a way will be found to ensure that the abuses about which we have heard today are brought to an end.

12.13 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Spicer): My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) began his important speech by talking about a common desire to protect the environment. He was being over-generous, because the total absence of any Opposition Members from this debate seems to suggest that the "environmental credentials"—to use one of my hon. Friend's phrases—of the Labour party have evaporated into thin air. So far there have been only two contributions from Labour Members—perhaps there will be more later—one of which related to Harrods. It seems bizarre that the future of Harrods can be of greater importance today than the future of the environment.

The House is undoubtedly indebted to my hon. Friend for giving it its first chance for many months to debate planning matters. The debate has properly ranged over a wide variety of planning issues, not the least important of which has just been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington). My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood made a cogent and well-argued case for including the demolition of houses in planning legislation. He was ably supported by the Bill's sponsors, and most notably by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), to whom the whole House is indebted for his hard work on this issue over some time.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood put it, the case a persuasive one. Opportunistic developers buy large houses and demolish them, leaving the site vacant, thus exerting pressure on both neighbouring property owners to sell and on local authorities to give planning permission for the redevelopment. That is a persuasive scenario.

My hon. Friend's warnings relate to the threat of town cramming and to housing development of an inappropriate density. Like others, my hon. Friend has also expressed understandable concern for the future of unlisted but "interesting" buildings, as my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) has called them, such as Victorian and Edwardian houses. The Government accept that those anxieties need to be seriously considered afresh and with an open mind. However, in so doing we are bound to take into consideration the other perspectives from which many people see those issues. Some of those perspectives were described from a position of great knowledge by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Teston (Mr. Ground), by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham.

Some of those different perspectives include the rights of private property owners within the planning system. We have to consider whether it is right to restrict an owner from demolishing his own building when it is in a poor state of repair, when it requires a great deal of work to bring it up to modern standards or where the demolition of the building could improve the environment—as indeed it might. There must at least be compelling reasons for interfering with the freedom and rights of ownership.

What is more, as several of my hon. Friends have said, the Government have been trying to lift the burdens on business and on individuals wherever we can and to eliminate unnecessary central and local bureaucracy——

Mr. O'Brien: Before the Minister pours further cold water on the Bill, will he continue to address his remarks to the future of the environment? No Opposition Member has suggested that environmental interests should not be safeguarded in the Bill. The Minister is turning his argument against the principle of the Bill to try to destroy it. If he and the Government are so keen on supporting it, why does he not say so, so that we can get on with the conclusion of its Second Reading?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is doing a good job of trying to make out, perhaps for the benefit of the television cameras, that there is a lot of support from his party. He should have said that no Labour Member is present and sat down.

Mr. O'Brien: We want it in Committee.

Mr. Spicer: I have not yet come to any conclusion. In my own time, I shall come to a conclusion, but I wish to make my speech in my own time. There is not much support on the Labour Benches, judging by today's debate. Except for this moment, when there are a few Labour Members present, the Labour Benches have been completely empty.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In view of that intervention, will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the Labour Government had an opportunity to enact the Dobry report? They decided not to. Perhaps that is the reason for the complete lack of support on the Labour Benches.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is correct. As I recollect, Anthony Crosland turned down the recommendations of that report. He said that there might come a day when some of the recommendations might be enacted. He gave good reasons of bureaucracy and clogging up the entire planning system for turning the report down. My hon. Friend is right to say that it was a Labour Government who turned down that report. We are being given synthetic stuff from the other side. Only one Labour Member has spoken except the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), who spoke about Harrods.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): We have not been waffling on like you.

Mr. Spicer: I have only just started, so the hon. Gentleman has more to come.

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend was addressing the philosophical point of the rights of owners. Does he accept

that there is an important distinction between owner-occupiers who intend to redevelop their own property because they live there and want to redevelop for some perfectly understandable, beneficial reason and owners of property companies—rapacious owners, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) referred to them—who involve themselves in demolition exercises simply to make a quick profit to the detriment of the local environment? Does he not see that important distinction?

Mr. Spicer: I see the distinction that my hon. Friend makes. A point that I shall make in a moment is that we shall have to address the extent of wrongdoing—if that is the right way of putting it—by people such as my hon. Friend mentioned.

The Government have tried to lift the burden on individuals and businesses and to eliminate unnecessary central and local government bureaucracy. I shall leave for a few moments my conclusions about the Bill, but one thing that cannot be denied is that it goes against the trend of deregulation and will increase the number of planning applications and appeals.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) questioned what effect the Bill might have. The Bill would add to the number of planning applications and appeal procedures and to the burden on local planning authorities, many of which are heavily stretched. That is illustrated by recent figures, which show that fewer than 50 per cent. of planning consents are decided within eight weeks, compared to the target set by the Government of 80 per cent. within that period. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North called it an arthritic process, and there is some merit in describing it in that way.

There can be little doubt that a requirement to give separate consideration to applications to demolish dwelling houses would make matters worse. Nor can I overlook the impact on the planning inspectorate. Last year, more than 28,600 planning appeals were made to the Department, an increase of 27 per cent. over the preceding year. The number of appeals has more than doubled since 1983. This is a problem of success, in that it is no doubt closely related to the buoyancy of the national economy, but that is small comfort to those who have to wait several months before receiving a decision on their appeal.

Therefore, the Government have set out to reduce the burden of planning control where the type or scale of development does not warrant the need to make a planning application. For example, our reform of the Use Classes Order in 1987 has created a greater climate of certainty for commerce and enterprise. We have been prepared to maintain or increase the extent of control in the interests of the environment and of local amenity, where there is solid evidence of widespread need for retention of controls.

Although the Government's general stance has been to deregulate the planning system, we are ready to increase planning controls where that is justified, but the case for doing so must be based on hard evidence, not mere anecdote.

My hon. Friends may ask what sort of evidence we need. It would be important for any Government to know whether the sort of problems my hon. Friends have described are widespread, or whether they are confined to outer London. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) said that there was plenty of evidence of demolition. I am sure that that is so but we have to decide and we need more evidence about the extent of the undesirability of that demolition and of the practices associated with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East referred to the case of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Williams of Elms road, Stanmore. There was an article about it in the February/March edition of *Housing and Planning Review*. The story and the allegations as told in that article make sorry reading. I understand that my hon. Friend has raised the case in the House on previous occasions. We must know the extent of harassment, vacancy, and unsatisfactory redevelopment and the destruction of interesting and beautiful houses before we can take a considered view of the subject.

Mr. Jessel: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: I shall give way when I have finished this point. Demolition of itself is not wrong or evil, if for instance, it replaces the building with something better. Associated practices and the effect of the demolition may make it so unsatisfactory that we should prevent it.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend mentioned the destruction of beautiful houses. Does it not seem to him nonsense that a local planning authority can say, "We like the look of that tree so you may not cut it down", whereas, unless a building is listed or is in a conservation area, it cannot say, "We like the look of that house, it is a nice old house which adds to the quality of the area. You may not knock down that house"? Is that not nonsense, about which we should do something quickly?

Mr. Spicer: That point was made earlier in the debate, but I do not believe there are any anomalies. There are listed houses and listed trees. There are also unlisted houses that cannot be demolished and other houses within conservation areas that cannot be demolished. The issue is whether we should greatly extend such controls.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend will be aware that a tree in a conservation area cannot be lopped, topped, felled or otherwise uprooted without the permission of the local authority as a result of the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974, which I introduced. There is no similar protection, however, for a non-listed dwelling in a conservation area. Surely that is an anomaly.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend will be aware that planning controls in conservation areas offer similar protection to that made available for listed properties and trees. I am sure that my hon. Friend is also aware, however, that such controls are restricted to conservation areas.

It would be irresponsible to contemplate national legislation without having national information. The first, step, therefore, must be for the Government to invite evidence from local authority associations, professional planning, heritage and conservation bodies and from house builders. The Department has had scarcely any unsolicited comment from any of those bodies on this subject.

Mr. Dykes: This comes from a Government who, we understand, introduced the community charge without universal evidence from up and down the country to demonstrate that it was a good idea. Be that as it may, I should emphasise that the Bill is not based on one esoteric, although horrifying, example in my constituency. I was thinking about this matter, along with many others, before

[Mr. Dykes]

that disreputable incident when one semi-detached house in a pair was pulled down without any warning to the other dweller.

This is a universal problem, albeit more common in the south than in the north. We need anticipatory action now before things get out of hand in the next property boom. That is why the Bill is universally supported—the Royal Town Planning Institute and other bodies have already expressed their unequivocal support.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend believes that the problem is widespread and universal, but we need evidence to prove that. We simply have not had such evidence other than to prove that the problem occurs in isolated examples, such as that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. Wilkinson: I have with me today more than 50 letters from right hon. and hon. Members who represent all parts of the country and who believe that there is a problem. I received just one letter against my Bill.

Mr. Spicer: I am in no doubt as to the importance of the debate, not only for airing the matter on the Floor of the House, but for enabling my hon. Friend to cite the examples and evidence that he has collected from colleagues who have not found it possible to take part in this debate.

The Government have an open mind about the issue. On closer investigation we might find that the problem is a slight one and that no action is required. Alternatively, such investigation might reveal that there was a national problem, which required a national solution. However, until today we have received few representations.

Another possibility is that the demolition of dwelling houses in the way in which my hon. Friends have described is confined to certain suburban areas and therefore invites a local solution. My right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North made a reasonable point when he said that, apart from one other hon. Friend, all the other contributions were made by those representing London or its suburban areas. There is nothing wrong in my hon. Friends representing the interests of their constituents, but when we consider our response, we must be clear whether it is a local issue, which would merit a local solution, or a national problem that merits national action.

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend was right to suggest that a local solution to the problem might be required, but does he accept that, at present, local councils do not have sufficient powers available to them to impose an effective local solution to prevent such demolitions?

Mr. Spicer: As I am about to deal with the Bill in detail, I hope that I shall be able to provide a direct answer to my hon. Friend.

We believe that it is not just a matter of going into Committee to sort out the problem; issues of principle are involved that have to be properly debated on Second Reading. If one accepts that there is a problem, however, there are at least half a dozen ways in which to deal with it—at least five are alternatives to my hon Friend's Bill.

I shall give five other ways in which the Government think that the problem could be addressed. One approach might be for local authorities to designate more conservation areas—this relates to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and was touched on by my Friend the hon. Member for Fulham. The criterion for designating a conservation area appears in section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. That states that such areas must be

"of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

I suspect that not all the residential areas which my hon. Friend's Bill seeks to protect would meet that criterion, although some may. Within a conservation area, demolition of a building requires conservation area consent.

Mr. Shersby: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. However, he will recall my earlier remarks, and those of other colleagues, that many of the houses that are being affected by such demolition are not in conservation areas because they are not of architectural and historic interest. We are talking about ordinary houses in which people live and which form an important part of the townscape.

Mr. Spicer: The point has been made during the debate that some of those areas may not be historic in the traditional sense, but nevertheless, because of their merits, they are nice places to live and should be preserved. One possibility would be to designate such areas, or parts of them, as conservation areas. I fully concede that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends might not want to press that option too hard for fear of diluting the concept of the conservation area. The Government may well not want to press local authorities to designate conservation areas merely to take advantage of control over demolition, especially as such designation would have further planning consequences.

A second, perhaps more promising approach, would be some sort of local or special development area selected by the local authority, within which planning permission might be required before a dwelling house could be demolished. That would leave the basic development control system unchanged, but give greater freedom of action to local planning authorites. It would require legislation. We could undertake to consider such a suggestion if it became clear, on closer examination, that there were serious problems in well-defined localities.

Mr. Wilkinson: This is a most important point. My right hon. and hon. Friends have simply said to the Minister that there are serious, interesting and important arguments such as those which he is adducing, but the proper place to advance them is in Committee, because the principle of this legislation is not in doubt. What are in doubt are the modalities of putting it into effect.

Mr. Spicer: There is some question about the Bill's principles. That was why I started my speech by directly addressing the matter of principle. I do not want to fudge it. I said that views involving matters of principle were put forward which were different from those promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a principle involved in property ownership, which is a fundamental principle of our sort of society? Where people have properties, which are not listed and which are therefore their properties to do with as they will, and as it is quite likely that what goes up on the site

may be more attractive than what comes down, should we not mind our own business and leave people to decide for themselves what to do with their own property?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend supports a view that I put forward at the beginning of my speech—that the Bill was strongly opposed on the basis of the rights of property. I made that point, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has underlined and underscored that principle.

Mr. Dykes: Owners can be harassed out of their properties by ruthless property developers, sometimes with a financial bribe, and my hon. Friend does not mind that. If property owners change more than 10 per cent. of the property, they have to apply for official planning permission to make that change. Why is that anomaly allowed, whereby if a property is demolished, no permission is required but if an owner wants to change more than 10 per cent. of a property, he or she has to seek planning permission? That is absurd.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend makes the point that there is widespread abuse and that the present system can have evil effects. I have maintained consistently throughout the debate that the Government are seeking concrete evidence of that, and I shall suggest how we propose to seek it. I am not arguing with my hon. Friend: he may be right. I am merely saying that, before we plunge into this legislation, even as a matter of principle, we must balance alternative principles against the one enshrined in this Bill.

I am also suggesting that there are fundamentally different ways in which to approach the problem, should there be one. If we were to choose any of the approaches that I am suggesting, we would not put the Bill into Committee and tinker with it there; we should have a different Bill—or perhaps we should not need a Bill at all.

Mr. Ground: Might the special areas that my hon. Friend has described include such designations as "buildings of townscape value", or categories of that sort, which local authorities have included in their plans, so as to provide a measure of protection outside conservation areas for buildings that are not statutorily listed?

Mr. Spicer: In his interesting speech, my hon. and learned Friend raised the central issue that, when dealing with this matter, we shall have to think of new categories. He now adds the idea of localised special areas. If we followed that path, we would need planning guidance that involved new concepts of categorisation.

This suggested route would require legislation different from that proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood. We could go along with such a suggestion if it became clear on close examination that there were serious problems within extremely well defined new categories of definition, and that such intermediate areas would not unnecessarily add severe complexity to the planning system. They would undoubtedly constitute another form of regulation, however, and we should have to consider them in that light.

A third possible option would be a prior notification system. Developers would be requested to give local authorities notice of their intention to demolish and redevelop. Such a practice could be adopted in selected areas, including those in outer London where the demolition of dwelling houses seems to have caused most problems. Without legislation, the only sanction would be adverse publicity, but even such a move would give local authorities the opportunity to say informally whether future development would be likely to receive planning permission. Those who support this Bill have not fully considered local authorities' sanctions on planning permission, should detrimental demolition take place.

Mr. Carrington: The weakness of my hon. Friend's argument at the moment is that the developer would immediately appeal to the Department of the Environment, with a good prospect of overturning the local planning decision.

Mr. Spicer: I understand that point, and the other point that has been made—that planning authorities may well find themselves under pressure once demolition has taken place and a nasty scar site is left. That notion, too, might require some legislative underpinning.

Mr. O'Brien: What length of time has the Minister in mind for notice? If the time is protracted, it will blight the area and that means that there is no merit in prior notice. The Bill lays down specific times and gives clear guidance. Why do we need prior notice?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman may have a point, but I should like to suggest some options. One could set down a time limit on notice in order to avoid procrastination and eliminate the problem of blight. I concede that no one can say how effective such an arrangement would be. No doubt the vast majority of developers who operate in a straightforward and responsible way already keep local planning authorities informed about their plans and would willingly comply with prior notice requests. However, more opportunistic developers might prefer to keep their plans under wraps and might care less about a bad press, if that was the only sanction that we had. That is one reason why legislation, if we decided to take that route, might be required.

A fourth course of action is a code of practice. Such a code would require the endorsement of the Government, the local authority associations and the house-building industry. Although a code is an authoritative statement of practice, it offers guidance rather than imposing statutory requirements, so its provisions are not directly enforceable by legal proceedings. However, the existence of a code would be a powerful means of concentrating the minds of individual developers. Clearly, a code of practice would rely on co-operation, openness and good will between the parties in order to be fully effective, although, of course, it has not been unknown for codes of practice to be underpinned by legislation.

A fifth option is to strengthen the Department's planning policy advice. A draft planning policy guidance note on housing, which we issued for consultation last year, already gives advice on demolition, redevelopment and housing densities. It includes a clear statement that demolition of existing property creates no presumption that permission will be granted for more intensive redevelopment. I can tell my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) that planning guidance has been issued about, for example, back development.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister is replying to a debate in which all the hon. Members who have spoken support the Bill. The Minister has now been speaking for more than half an hour, and it is evident to some of us that he is stretching matters. I was about to use the word

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

"filibuster", but you would not like that. Standing Order No. 35 deals with the matter of the Question being now put. It says:

"unless it shall appear to the chair that such motion is an abuse of the rules of the House, or an infringement of the rights of the minority, the question 'That the question be now put,' shall be put forthwith."

No one has spoken against the Bill. The next Bill on today's agenda is about looking after people who are dying from cancer because they were in the vicinity of nuclear tests in the Pacific. It is promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay).

The promoter of the present Bill has kindly suggested that the House should have a reasonable amount of time to discuss my hon. Friend's Bill. However, it is evident that the Minister is stretching things by dealing with matters that could be taken up in Committee. I now see that a couple of hon. Members have been brought in by the Government Whips in order to take up more time with speeches. I suggest that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should look carefully at Standing Order No. 35. Let us get the Minister down and move on to the next business, so that we can satisfy the demands of many hon. Members.

Mrs. Gorman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some hon. Members who hold a minority view are waiting to speak on this matter. We are listening with great interest to the Minister before making our contribution, so that we do not duplicate what the Minister says.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am very much in the hands of the House, but even in the short time that I have been in the Chair, it has become evident to me from the list of prospective speakers that there is considerable interest in the Bill. Unless shorter speeches are made—I am not being critical of any particular right hon. or hon. Member—it will be exceedingly difficult for me to call all those who wish to speak before 2.30 pm.

Mr. Spicer: Talking about people who have not been around——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you not agree that it is a tradition of the House that right hon. and hon. Members wanting to participate in a debate attempt to be present in the Chamber for most of the debate? It is a matter of concern that hon. Members entering the Chamber long after the debate has started, who have not listened to any of the opening speeches, should now seek to catch your eye.

Is not that clearly an abuse of the rules of the House and clear evidence that certain Conservative Members are determined to deny my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) the opportunity to present his Bill dealing with the serious subject of compensation for nuclear test veterans? I hope that you, Sir, will carefully consider which right hon. or hon. Members you call, and select only those who have been present in the Chamber for most of the debate.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Neither the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) nor the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has been present in the Chamber for this morning's debate. I have, but those two hon Gentlemen would be unable to testify to that, because of their absence. A number of hon. Members who have made interventions, and I too hope to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in due course.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The reason why my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and I have not attempted to catch your eye is because we are satisfied with the Bill now before the House and want to vote on the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair takes into account the length of time that a right hon. or hon. Member has spent in the Chamber. It is clear from the information available to me that a large number of hon. Members who have been present throughout the debate have yet to participate in it. As I said, unless shorter speeches are made from now on, some hon. Members will inevitably be disappointed.

Mr. Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it would be to the convenience of the House, I intend, if the House gives me leave to do so, to sum up in three or five minutes the arguments that have been made. If my hon. Friend the Minister can bring his speech to an early conclusion, my right hon. and hon. Friends will be able to reach a decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Spicer: I have not strayed off course for one moment, but have sought only to answer directly the points made in this extremely important debate. It sticks in my craw that Labour Members have largely been absent for the whole debate, other than the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), and the Labour Whip, who has been trying to make a bit of noise on the pretence that the Labour party is interested in the subject. Suddenly, a whole lot of Labour Members have entered the Chamber and started complaining that a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends should not be allowed to speak, simply because they too have not attended the whole of the debate. That is quite wrong.

The fifth option that I suggest is the strengthening of the Department's planning policy advice. We could add the advice that local and unitary development plans should include policies such that, where redevelopment would have an adverse effect on the character of a neighbourhood, planning permission could be refused on that ground, taking into account all other material considerations. We could suggest also that local plans make it clear that an applicant would not improve his case for redevelopment by creating a vacant site.

We not only believe that matters of principle need to be tested against the arguments that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood quite properly and ably made, but that we must also consider a wide variety of alternative ways of addressing the problem. The Government believe that in so doing we must avoid unnecessary regulation.

Mrs. Gorman: I listened with interest to my hon. Friend's five points. I am surprised that he did not mention insurance, particularly of semi-detached properties. The Government should suggest that people insure semi-detached houses in such a way that, should half the house

be demolished, the owners of the other half can be heavily compensated. Will he consider the prospect of insurance as a means of coping with some of those identified problems?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend raises an extremely interesting point, which we should consider seriously. That dimension has not been discussed so far.

The Government aim throughout their planning policy to achieve a balance between the needs of development and those of the environment. My right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North rightly said that there is continuing strong demand for housing, particularly in the south. He rightly said that that is not imported demand but results from changing social trends, such as the break-up of families and various other factors. We must balance those needs against those of the environment.

We must also achieve a balance between the requirements to protect the green belt and the countryside and the need to avoid town cramming, to which Conservative members representing London constituencies have quite properly alluded.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood is understandably concerned to protect the suburban environment, which is typified by his constituency.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am sure that my hon. Friend will recall that in my speech I alluded to my previous experience in Bradford. This is as much an inner-city problem as an urban one. It is a nationwide problem.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend may be right that this problem, which exists mainly in London suburbs, also exists in other suburbs and town centres. I do not deny that, but we need evidence of it. We must balance the objectives that he has put on behalf of those areas with the needs of the green belt and the other measures to protect the countryside, about which many of my right hon. and learned Friend's are concerned.

The Government have said that they are considering bringing forward a planning Bill to tackle those objectives in a comprehensive and balanced way. I therefore say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood that we are not ready, even in principle, to accept the Bill. It is not just a question of details that can be ironed out in Committee.

I have already said that we shall carefully consider my hon. Friend's arguments and any evidence that we find to support them. I can now go further and say that I propose that the Department should prepare a consultation paper, which would set out the issue and invite views on the scale of the problem nationwide. It would also seek comments on the various options that I have briefly described, including the option suggested in the Bill. Such a paper would be ready for issue by April, and we could invite responses by June.

I can make no promises, but if the results of the consultation show that there is a severe and widespread problem, as discussed and defined in the debate, the Government would carefully consider the possibility of legislation.

We are certainly looking for an early opportunity to legislate on a variety of planning issues. I say that, of course, without prejudice to the Queen's Speech in the forthcoming Session. I make that offer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood in a constructive and positive spirit and I hope that my hon. Friend will receive it in that spirit. Meanwhile, for the reasons I have given, I must advise the House not to give the Bill a Second Reading.

12.59 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on his success in the ballot and on the witty and persuasive way in which he opened the debate. Perhaps my hon. Friend can explain whether one finds, when one is high on the ballot, that one's heart leaps for joy or sinks with feelings of grim dissatisfaction. I know that it involves a good deal of work and that my hon. Friend has put a good deal of work into the Bill.

My hon. Friend referred to a surfeit of Government legislation. It might be fairer to recognise that there is too much of all legislation and that almost all legislation is a mistake. All too often we have to return with amendments to legislation the year after we have passed it and the year after that we have to produce amendments to the amendments. We must recognise that legislation in itself rarely makes things better, rarely makes people happier and can rarely be said to be a good thing. Any hon. Member who introduces legislation should be aware of the law of unintended consequences. In particular, if any new law is intended to produce A, it is likely to produce B. If it is intended to reduce an activity, it is likely to increase it. If it is intended to put a restriction on intelligent people, as the Bill is intended to do, they are likely to find some way, without too much difficulty, to get round it.

I must confess to some regret that we have a ballot for private Members' legislation as opposed to a ballot for private Members' repeals. The productivity of hon. Members should be based not on the number of new laws that they introduce, but on the number of old laws that they get rid of. The presumption should be against giving powers that did not exist before either to central or local government. There are various reasons for that. Government as such is a necessary, though unpleasant, evil, and should be curbed wherever possible. In addition, changing the law causes confusion, uncertainty, expense and delay, and in the long run, as a result of the confusion, there is a disregard for the law in general. We change the law far too much and no political party has been very good at it.

My next presumption is that we should be in favour of people having the liberty to do what they want without restriction. As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) put it, with her usual vividness, the presumption should be against interferences in liberty. The Bill is an interference in the liberty to do what one wants with one's own property. However, we must recognise that all planning legislation is an interference in that liberty and that it was introduced with open eyes. People realised that it would be an interference, but they thought that it would be better to have such interference.

The advantages of each interference in the liberty of the subject must be balanced carefully against the disadvantages, and, in my view, the benefits to be gained from such interference with people's freedoms should heavily outweigh the disadvantages.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Could not that point be argued just as effectively in Committee, so that those whose freedom has been interfered with by radioactivity poisoning could be satisfied that the House is considering

[Mr. Bob Cryer].

the awarding of proper and adquate compensation through the Radiation Exposed Crown Employees (Benefits) Bill? That Bill is due to be considered next, but the hon. Gentleman seems intent on talking it out.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have not been thinking about the Bill that is to follow. If we reach it in time, that is fine, but I do not consider that the principle of freedom could appropriately be discussed in Committee. The details of the Bill can be discussed then, but the principle is sufficiently important to be discussed on the Floor of the House. If the hon. Gentleman does not agree with that, one wonders what he is doing in the House.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman has cast aspersions on my hon. Friend's feelings about freedom. Does the hon. Gentleman feel no loyalty to former service men who are dying of cancer as a result of being poisoned while carrying out their duties in Australia and elsewhere? Is he entirely happy for them and their widows to be deprived of their fair dos? He has plainly been set up as a stooge to talk the Bill out. Does not participating in such an exercise make him feel a little dirty?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have heard Opposition Members muttering words such as "filibuster" during the past 20 minutes. I do not understand how the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) squares that with his attempt to drag such issues as Australia, service men and the next Bill on the Order Paper into our present debate. I am discussing the principle and the merit of this Bill, and I shall continue to do so. In my view, it curtails individual liberties and should not be passed.

If we are to change the law to curtail freedoms, we must be sure of three things. First, we must be sure that a problem exists; secondly, we must be sure that the proposed solution is the best possible; thirdly, we must be sure that the solution is a significant improvement on the position that it is intended to cure. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood really believe that the man in the street would be happy for local authorities to be given the power that the Bill would confer on them? Perhaps we all have a similar image of planners: perhaps we all see them as faceless local government bureaucrats.

Mr. Hanley: May I answer my hon. Friend's question to our hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson)? Yesterday, the chief planning officer for Richmond upon Thames borough council—the excellent Mr. Ted Latham—told me that he welcomed the powers granted by the Bill, and that he was very glad that we were discussing such a measure.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am sure that that is so, but it does not answer the question that I asked. I asked whether the man in the street would want Mr. Latham to be given those powers.

I have received no letters in support of the Bill; moreover, although I spent nine years as a borough councillor, I have never received a request for the introduction of permission for the demolition of houses. If my hon. Friend's experience is different, I bow to it, but his constituency and mine are relatively similar, being in London but fairly suburban.

Mr. Hanley: When I issued a press release stating that I was a supporter of an earlier version of the Bill, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), I received a deluge of letters from people saying that that was exactly what I should be doing.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend has obviously had a different experience from mine.

I want to consider the view of planners that I suspect most people share. We begin by thinking of planners as faceless local government bureaucrats. Then if a neighbour wants to erect an extension that overlooks our windows, we think of planners as potential saviours who do not have enough powers. Then if we want to put up an extension, the planners turn into petty-minded Hitlers who can only say no. At whatever stage in that process we may find ourselves, we do not believe that planners have produced a Britain that is generally more attractive.

One of the main problems with the Bill is that it betrays a philosophy that planners and committees of local councillors know best despite the diversity, colour and excitement that can be provided by many separate decisions taken by different people. This country has some glorious architecture and some abysmal architecture. It also has everything in between. I believe that the diversity of our architecture constitutes the richness of our heritage and that diversity has rarely been improved or increased by town planners.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood said that he hoped to introduce a measure that was fully in line with Government policy and philosophy. Is it likely that this Administration would want to add to planning restrictions instead of removing them? My hon. Friend was right to say that Conservatives are conservationists by nature. However, we want to preserve what is best and most worth while rather than turn mediocre buildings into museums.

At the time of the greatest restrictions on planning, we did not have the planning restriction proposed in the Bill. There was nearly a change in the law in 1975 as a result of the Dobry report. I asked the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) why the Labour party has apparently changed its position about implementing the Dobry report. Answer, I am afraid, came there none. The hon. Gentleman simply talked about mining subsidence.

We must consider the arguments in favour of the Bill espoused by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood. He suggested that the Bill was necessary because it would stop owners demolishing a house to prevent it being listed. However, powers already exist to deal with that problem, including spot-listing as happened with Kensington town hall.

There are already extensive powers to control the demolition of buildings of intrinsic merit. The Bill must be aimed at buildings that are of less than intrinsic merit, and that point has been made clearly today. We could argue that spot-listing was of little use where local authorities or the Department of the Environment had no inkling of any intention to demolish. However, that is a relatively minor problem and does not happen very often. The Bill is too cumbersome an answer to that problem.

The main argument that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood produced in favour of the Bill was that at the moment developers can buy a house with a garden and demolish the house, intending to encourage the local authority to give planning permission for higher

density building on that land and to include the garden. That is a difficult point to address and my hon. Friend and other hon. Members made it effectively.

A Department of the Environment document entitled "Planning Policy Guidance No. 3" specifically covers that point in paragraph 17. It states:

"The demolition of existing property does not in itself create any presumption that permission will be granted for more intensive redevelopment. Where the planning authority considers that existing densities in a particular area should not be exceeded, a statement to that effect in the local plan can help to deter the speculative demolition of sound housing."

At this stage, any developer who tried to demolish a building before receiving planning permission to put up a new one would be taking an enormous risk. He would demolish a perfectly sound house without any certainty of being allowed even to put up the same house again, let alone another for higher density housing.

As a limb of the argument, it may be said that if one house in a row of identical houses is demolished, it would break up the theme of the road. Several hon. Members made that point. One of my hon. Friends said that it would look like a gap in a row of teeth. Tha may be true of the Nash terraces in Bath, because their importance lies in the intrinsic beauty of the buildings, but, by and large, the same could not be said of modern council estates, where row upon row of relatively similar little houses can be some of the most depressing sights in the country.

The hon. Member for Normanton said that there is evidence of the demolition of sound houses on a grand scale in London docklands. He did not seem to appreciate that special planning rules for London docklands were expressly granted to eliminate planning delays and to revive docklands. Those rules do not apply outside docklands. The special planning rules in docklands were astonishingly successful in the revival of docklands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood said also that one aim of the Bill is to bring into use land that is currently unused and neglected, rather than to build on green field sites. I am paraphrasing what my hon. Friend said. I apologise to him if I have got his words wrong.

Mr. Wilkinson: It would be better if my hon. Friend stuck to the facts of what I said, and stuck to them briefly. I was merely quoting from the 1987 Conservative party manifesto.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend obviously believes that his Bill would achieve what he quoted from the Conservative party manifesto. I must disagree. The Bill would discourage the demolition of buildings, and thus force developers on to green field sites. It would produce precisely the opposite effect from the one that he intends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr Dykes) suggested that, if the Bill is technically flawed, it could be amended in Committee and that that is what the Committee stage is for. I do not agree with my hon. Friend on that.

I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood has much greater knowledge and experience of planning. My knowledge was gleaned on the planning committee of a local council. The Bill shows a misunderstanding of the planning system. A new development does not require planning permission, except in the sense that planning permission simply grants immunity from enforcement action. The Bill would require planning permission for demolition in a way that does not apply to construction and development. The scheme of planning permission and the scheme of planning legislation do not make any allowance for such a restriction because of the prohibition——

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that I have been in the Chamber all morning and that up to now I have not made any points or order or intervened. The last thing that I want to do is to hold up proceedings. However, as someone who is not a procedural expert, may I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) has now been speaking for 20 minutes, after many other long speeches, including one of 45 minutes from the Minister.

I should like to put it to you and, through you, to some Conservative Members, that many people outside the House will not understand these parliamentary games and that the British ex-servicemen and their families who had enormous hopes of the Bill that is to follow this Bill will be appalled if the House fails to pass that Bill, and even more appalled if there is not even the opportunity to discuss it and to have something put on the record. I listened carefully to what you said in response to earlier points of order but I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make whatever moves you can to help those who have come here today to listen to our discussions about a Bill to help people who are dying and who fear dying, who cannot wait another year, two years or 10 years for the legislation, and who should have an opportunity to be heard.

Mr. Wilkinson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hereby forgo any rights which, by the leave of the House, I may have to reply to the debate and I beg to move, That the Question be now put——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to accept that motion.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may recall that a week last Monday we discussed a business motion on various recommendations made by the Select Committee on Procedure relating to the procedures in the House. When I was making a speech that was shorter than that made today by the Minister, the Government Chief Whip moved the closure in the middle of my speech when several hon. Members who are now present, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who had been present throughout that debate, had indicated that they wanted to speak. On that occasion, the debate had run for only one hour although it had been undertaken for two hours on a previous occasion when I could not be present because I was in a Select Committee. I should have thought that that example provides a clear precedent because an hon. Member was on his feet, the closure motion was moved and it was accepted by the Chair. I hope that you will bear that in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not questioning the judgment of the Chair. Situations vary greatly in this matter, all that I can say is that the closure was requested and has been refused. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Arbuthnot *rose*——

Hon. Members: Stop filibustering.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are you taking into consideration the fact that it is the Bill's promoter, the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) who has moved the closure and has asked that the Question now be put? If the hon. Gentleman is honourable enough to give my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) at least the opportunity to speak to his Bill—although we hope that it will receive its Second Reading today—should you not take the fact that the hon. Gentleman has made that gesture into account when considering whether to accept a closure motion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be very much better if we were to get on with the debate. Perhaps if we do so, we shall reach the second Bill on the Order Paper. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Arbuthnot *rose*——

Mr. Boyes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. From your long experience in the House, is it not absolutely clear that Conservative Members are trying to talk out the Bill? I do not doubt that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), who was speaking, will stay on his feet for a considerable time, which makes things extremely difficult for my hon. Friends, especially in view of the importance of the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North is seeking to propose. Many people have been affected by the nuclear tests and we are simply trying to give them adequate compensation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Boyes: Stop the filibustering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and allow the closure as moved by the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be wise if we were to get on with the debate. There is still over an hour to go. Points of order are only delaying matters and they are coming close to questioning the judgment of the Chair. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The scheme of planning legislation——

Mr. Rogers: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am prepared to accept your ruling from the Chair. However, I wish that you would give the House a little clarification of the reason why you made that ruling. There are adequate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has been here long enough to know that the Chair never gives reasons in this respect. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, televison was brought into the Chamber by a majority vote for an experimental period. I wonder whether we should adjust our procedures in the light of that. Many millions of people are watching anxiously, waiting for the Radiation Exposed Crown Employees (Benefits) Bill to come before the House. That means that pressure is put on this place from outside to come to the second Bill, which would help people who are seriously injured and dying. In those circumstances and in view of the majority vote for television, it might be a good idea to think again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my job not to consider television or anything else but to consider the order of the House. We are debating the first Bill set down for discussion today. That is the reality of the matter. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Clearly, it would be wholly improper to question your judgment and discretion in matters of this nature. One of the tasks of the Chair is to protect Back Benchers from any abuse. As I understand it, one of the principles is that if a Bill has had a good run it is within the discretion of the Chair to accept a closure motion. As a matter of general principle, when the hon. Member promoting a Bill has decided that it is proper that a motion be made, is there not a case for saying that weight should be attached to that decision?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member started by saying that he did not question the judgment of the Chair. He went on to do just that. It would be wise to continue the debate. Points of order only delay matters. If we continue the debate there may be some time for the second Bill. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Skinner : Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Under Standing Order No. 35 of the rules of the House, the Chair has the power in certain circumstances to accept the motion, that the Question be now put. You know that as well as I do, and the Clerks and the other authorities of the House know it. That applies in debates and it can apply after only one hour. The Chair has to make a decision. It is based on the rights of the majority and of the minority. If you have talked to Mr. Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair earlier you will know that hon. Members who spoke in the initial part of the debate were all in favour of the Bill. They wanted to get rid of the Bill. The promoter of the Bill has waived his right to reply to the debate. Everybody was in favour and then suddenly a couple of hon. Members—supposedly the minority—came from nowhere to filibuster.

You have a right to make sure that the procedures of the House under Standing Order No. 35 are carried out. Otherwise, people out there, especially the relatives of those who have died of cancer from serving in the Pacific and the ex-service men who are dying will wonder what is wrong with the procedures of the House of Commons. You have a duty to—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member and the whole House realise that attempts to bring pressure on the Chair are out of order.

Mr. Rogers: Who has put on the pressure?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Such attempts can only be counterproductive. The Chair has a difficult job in exercising judgment in cases of this nature. I have exercised my judgment. We must now continue with the debate. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When we debated the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, a closure motion was not accepted until about 2.20 pm. On that occasion I believe that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) did his best to frustrate any debate. It may be that some of my colleagues are learning from him.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Following the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who arrived for this debate at about 1.15 pm, may I say with great respect for your functions and for the Chair, that the pressure exerted is against the will of the House, which wants to have a Division or to approve the Second Reading of the Bill? Virtually every speech in a long debate has been made in favour of the Bill. Even the Minister was understanding and accommodating about some aspects of it. Given that there is such an important Bill following, surely it is the will of the House that we should proceed to a decision.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall, of course, hear the points of order, but we cannot have a debate now on the way in which closure motions operate in the House. There is only an hour to go before 2.30 pm and we are cutting into valuable private Members' time by prolonging the points of order.

Mr. Hanley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would be quite wrong for the comments of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about those who have spoken in this debate having only recently come into the Chamber to go on record. Everyone who has spoken for or against the Bill has been here since the beginning of the day.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In exercising your discretion, which must, of course, always be a matter for the Chair on a Friday, there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who may well have cancelled constituency engagements in the hope of being present for the second Bill on the Order Paper. I hope that you will take this into account when making your decision.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Boyes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appeal to you to reconsider your decision. In a place that we cannot mention there are a number of service men and ex-service men who have a great interest in what is happening in the Chamber today. They must wonder what the hell is going on. We have an important Bill that is vital to soldiers, to their wives and to other people. Those soldiers served their country—among my papers I have a list of people who have died or suffered as a result of such service—and they must wonder why it is that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot anticipate a debate that will arise if we reach the second Bill on the Order Paper. We must now continue with the debate on the first Bill. I call Mr. Arbuthnot.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Reverting once again to planning legislation, the scheme of planning legislation does not make any allowance for a restriction on demolition as the prohibition on demolishing listed buildings is possible only because of the much more detailed control otherwise exercised over listed buildings than is exercised over other buildings.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Be a man and wind up.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have already said that I believe that the Bill is likely to be ineffective because a developer might well apply for permission to demolish a house to build a single unit, which would be granted almost automatically. He would demolish the existing house without building the new one and would then immediately apply to build what he wanted to build in the first place. If we come to that scenario, the Bill will have got us nowhere. It is wide open to abuse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) suggested that a council should be given permission to take over land that has been derelict for a long time. As a rule, councils do not have a good record on dealing with their properties and such powers would not deal with my central point—the intelligent manipulation of the system by developers. We would be likely to see an increased number of applications to demolish buildings as well as bogus applications to develop buildings. That combination would ensure that the entire planning system ground to a halt with the obvious damage consequent upon that. What would be the consequences of an overloaded system such as would be created? Councils would not be able to keep up, developers would therefore have to go on appeal to the Department of the Environment——

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When you assumed the Chair this afternoon I distinctly heard you admonish hon. Members to keep their speeches brief and to the point. It seems that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is deliberately disobeying you. I merely draw the matter to your attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no power at present to limit speeches, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) will bear it in mind that there are hon. Members who wish to speak.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Arbuthnot: The only effect of more appeals——

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Arbuthnot: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot do so too often because of the number of points that are being made by Opposition Members.

Mr. Boyes: Will the hon. Gentleman consider what the next Bill means, and end his speech so that people can hear the case for the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) wishes to introduce? I appeal to the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot)—I do not usually appeal to Conservative Members—because I am concerned about the people who are suffering and need compensation, and want to take this chance of getting them that money. The hon. Gentleman is the only Member to have spoken against the Bill in this morning's debate. Therefore, I ask him to sit down now so that the closure motion may be put.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Gentleman may appreciate that I am not in a position to comment on the next Bill. My speech would have been considerably shorter if there had been fewer interruptions.

The only effect of the Bill would be bureaucracy, delay, forms, regulations and more civil servants. The Bill contains no suggestion for extra finance to produce those extra civil servants, forms and bureaucracy. No money would be available to local authorities to pay for the extra work that they had to do. No money could be introduced because this is a private Member's Bill.

Over the past few weeks probably all hon. Members have received representations from constituents who are local councillors to say that the Government keep shovelling duties on local government without providing extra money to perform those duties. That argument could certainly be applied to the Bill.

It is presumably intended that all the panoply of the appeals procedure to the Secretary of State, with public inquiries and everything else, should accompany this change. One point has not been sufficiently well made: the Bill does not change the planning grounds that would apply to developers. It would follow from existing planning guidelines that, if a person applied to demolish a house that was not listed, the planning authority would have to grant it or the Department of the Environment would have to allow an appeal. Therefore, I do not understand how the Bill would achieve its desired effect.

The Bill applies not only to any building that is a dwelling house, but to any building that has been used as a dwelling house. What does that mean? Does it mean, "has ever been used as a dwelling house"? How on earth is anybody supposed to know what has been used as a dwelling house?

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Arbuthnot: I shall not give way because so many points have been made about my taking too long.

If the principle of the Bill is correct, it should not be restricted to dwelling houses, but widened to cover the scope of buildings such as the Hoover building and Kensington town hall. I do not believe that the wrong decision was made about Kensington town hall. I declare an interest because I was a councillor in the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea and was consulted about, and fully in support of, the decision to pre-empt a political decision made by the Greater London Council to list Kensington town hall, a building of no merit.

Would it become a matter for sanction if a house, rather than being demolished, was simply allowed to decay and fall down? That would have to follow from the principle behind the Bill. Perhaps a house could be encouraged, surreptitiously or otherwise, to fall down. That would certainly begin to happen. There would be explosions at dead of night and houses would suddenly collapse. The owner would say, "Well, honest, it wasn't me." But we could not believe him.

What will happen if part of a house is pulled down? What if it is pulled down room by room? I stand to be corrected if I am wrong—many hon. Members have more knowledge of this than I do—but I believe that a building, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, includes part of a building, with the absurd result that any tiny change in a house would constitute its demolition. Taking that to extremes, one could suggest that the removal of a tap would amount to the demolition of a building.

I should find it very hard to support the Bill. I, too, represent a London surburban constituency, and my constituents have serious anxieties about planning—more directed towards what goes up than towards what comes down, however. They complain to me that people put up buildings without planning permission and then feel entitled to apply for retrospective permission. They complain about the permitted development in my constituency. They complain that people may build in the most insensitive way merely because they are increasing their property by less than 10 per cent. They complain not about permitted demolition, but about the number of appeals to the Department of the Environment——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that you appealed for brief speeches at the beginning of the debate. Have you taken account of the fact that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to one of the Defence Ministers, who is very keen to stop the next debate? No Defence Minister has come in for the next debate. I suggest that it would be reasonable for you to appeal to the hon. Gentleman to make a brief speech, and if he persists in filibustering I hope that you will take that into account if the closure is moved soon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has no power at this stage to limit speeches, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) will take into account the fact that other hon. Members want to speak.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfounded and grossly unfair allegations have been made against my hon. Friend. Will you confirm that the next debate would be answered by a social security Minister, who has been listening to the debate and who knows the situation rather better than some Opposition Members who have not been in the Chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I should have finished by now if the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) had not intervened.

The number of appeals being granted by the Department of the Environment causes concern. Such matters are and should be addressed by the Secretary of State for the Environment in the planning Bill in the next Session of Parliament. The matters that I have discussed are what cause anxiety, not the matters dealt with in the Bill, which is why I cannot support it.

Mr. Wilkinson: I respectfully beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Boyes *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not hear any Noes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have put the Question, and I heard Ayes and Noes. We are now proceeding to a Division.

The House having divided: Ayes 81, Noes 3.

Division No. 100] **[1.42 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carrington, Matthew
Clay, Bob
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
French, Douglas
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert N.
Watts, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Wilkinson and
Mr. Jeremy Hanley.

NOES

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Janman, Tim
Summerson, Hugo

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Marshall and
Mr. Edward Leigh.

Whereupon MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for Closure).*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

1.53 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on drawing the number that he did in the ballot, and on the way in which he introduced his measure. However, I have serious reservations about my hon. Friend's Bill. I shall begin by going back in time and examining the way in which a human settlement develops over the centuries.

I take as an example Southwark, on the south bank of the Thames. One can find evidence of a settlement there going back 2,000 years. The Romans used the same area for further building, and throughout the dark ages, the Norman conquest and mediaeval times——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you clarify something for me? We have voted on the closure. Hon. Members who did not want the debate to continue voted for the closure. The other option was to vote for the debate to be continued. Is it in order for an hon. Member who did not vote for the debate to be continued to continue it after the vote has taken place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What is happening is perfectly in order. Perhaps it would be helpful if I reminded the House that for a closure motion to be carried, 100 hon. Members must vote for it, but 100 hon. Members did not vote for it, so it was decided in the negative. It follows automatically that the House, not the Chair, has decided that the debate should continue. What is happening is in order.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that, in these troubled times of hon. Members not declaring their interests, hon. Members will debate next week the important issue of an hon. Member failing to declare interests of about £80,000. Would you think it advisable, in a debate that would have dealt with those seeking compensation from the state—the widows of those who have died from cancer and those who are currently suffering from it—for a member of Lloyd's involved in the insurance market, who might well not be very keen on the state giving handouts, to declare his interest before making filibustering speeches against the Bill?

Will you examine the record to see whether the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) or any other hon. Member who has taken part in the debate, has declared his interest? There is no doubt that, if the state pays compensation, there will be less of a market for those in Lloyd's. I think that that needs examining.

Mr. Rogers: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) began his speech I did not hear him declare his interests—and neither did you, because I do not think that he did so. As I understand it, under the rules of the House, hon. Members are asked to declare their interests in the Register of Members' Interests and in debates. One Conservative Member has been investigated as a result of his breaching that Standing Order. The hon. Member for Walthamstow is speaking in a debate on property, property values and planning permission. He is a diector of a property company and a chartered surveyor. I submit that he is in breach of the rules of the House and that you should bring him to order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House knows well that hon. Members who have an interest should declare it in debate. That is well known in the House, and I am sure that every hon. Member will observe it. If any hon. Member believes that there has been a breach of that strong convention, the correct procedure is to write to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that if sufficient

[Mr. Richard Holt]

Labour Members had bothered to attend today we would not have had all these points of order because they would have been able to carry the closure motion.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall speak very honestly. What is making me sick this afternoon is that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) was born in 1952 and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) was born in 1950. The people in a place that we cannot mention fought, and many died, so that people like those two hon. Gentlemen could come into this Chamber in a free democracy. Now they are taking advantage——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is speaking from the Front Bench and the Chair expects him to set a good example. His point is a perfectly legitimate point of debate, but it is not a point of order for the Chair. I call Mr. Summerson.

Mr. Summerson: I must defend myself against what has been said about declaring my interests. I see that in the third paragraph of my notes, I have put in brackets, "state CS". I was coming on to the fact—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should have declared my interest in my opening words but, as I understand the rules of the House—I am open to correction——

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not an expert on procedure. Some of the rules of the House baffle me and I find some irrelevant. However, we call each other hon. Members when addressing each other in debate. Is it honourable for an hon. Member who has been speaking for five minutes to say cynically, after it has been pointed out to him that he is in breach of the rules of the House, that a declaration of interest was in his notes?

I came here specially, on the very early train today, to represent a constituent, Clifford Hutchinson, who is an honourable man. He was on Christmas Island and now, every day of his life, is in pain——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must not anticipate the next debate. The hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

In this House, we are all hon. Members. Every hon. Member knows very well that the strong conventions are that if there is a direct interest in the subject under discussion, the hon. Member concerned must declare his interest. That is well known.

Mr. Livingstone: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) said that he was about to make a statement referring to the initials "CS". Does that stand for "crooked swindler"?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Summerson: As I understand the rules of the House, hon. Members have to declare an interest. However, the rules do not state where in the course of his remarks an hon. Member is supposed to state that interest —*[Interruption.]* If the House will give me the opportunity, I shall eventually come on to the part of my speech in which I declare that interest.

I was talking about the history of sites of human settlement——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was pointed out to you a short time ago that hon. Members are supposed to declare their interests in a speech. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) announced that he was about to declare his interest, but he has veered away from the subject again. May I ask him through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he will now state exactly and explicitly what interests he has in insurance, property, banking or anything else which might have a bearing on the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) is free to make his own speech in his own way.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not in accordance with your ruling a few minutes ago and with the conventions of the House generally that an hon. Member who has to declare an interest should do so at the beginning of his speech so that hon. Members can judge what he is saying? Surely, if an hon. Member decided that he was not going to declare his interest until the end of his speech, much of that provision would be made void. I hope that you will urge the hon. Gentleman to make the declaration of interest which he said he was going to make, but which so far he has not made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the strong impression that the hon. Member for Walthamstow is about to clarify the position. I appeal to the House to exercise the sense of fairness that has always prevailed here, and allow him to do so.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will not take another point of order until the hon. Member for Walthamstow has clarified the position.

Mr. Summerson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will certainly bow to your ruling and state that I am a chartered surveyor and also the director of a property company, from which I have drawn no remuneration since June 1987.

Mr. Livingstone: Which company?

Mr. Summerson: It is called Palatine Properties Ltd., and the hon. Gentleman can go to Companies house and look it up whenever he chooses.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Member for Palatine Properties give way?

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not usually a reader of "Erskine May", but I have studied its ruling on this subject. On page 385, under the heading "Declaration of interests in debate", it is explicitly stated:

"A Member will normally declare his interest at the beginning of his remarks."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the hon. Member concerned to decide what is the appropriate moment for him to declare his interest. The passage that the hon. Gentleman has just quoted uses the word "normally"; the hon. Member for Walthamstow is a fairly new Member, and we all have to absorb experience. In any event, the hon. Member for Walthamstow has now clarified the position, and I feel that the House should accept that and allow him to get on with his speech.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) may at some stage have obeyed the advice in "Erskine May". Am I right in thinking, however, that an earlier speaker in this important debate failed to declare an interest? If so, would it be in order for him to repair the apparent omission, if he is present or returns to the Chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I dealt with that earlier; perhaps the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was not in the Chamber at the time. If any hon. Member considers that there has been a breach of the conventions, customs and guidance contained in "Erskine May", his proper course is to take the matter up with the hon. Member concerned and/or the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is true that I own a flat in the basement of my house, but I do not intend to demolish my house.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too am a relatively new Member; I also happen to be an ex-service man. Is it in order for me to ask Conservative Members, through you, to refrain from their present disgraceful activity and stop filibustering? We should then have a chance, even at this late hour, of proceeding with a Bill that the people of this country want us to debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My job is to ensure that the rules of order are observed. They are being observed, and the hon. Member for Walthamstow is in order.

Mr. Summerson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the record will show that I have so far managed to get through about one twentieth of my speech, as I have to go back to the beginning every time I am interrupted.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I seek clarification of your most recent ruling on whether interests have been declared? Surely, as this is a Standing Order, it is a matter for you or Mr. Speaker and not for the adjudication of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair cannot possibly be a judge in this matter. That is one of the reasons why we have a Select Committee on Members' Interests. If any hon. Member—I have repeated this on several occasions already—feels that there has been a breach, he should put a case to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which will of course examine the matter carefully and, if appropriate, report in due course to the House.

Mr. Boyes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I read out the relevant sentence from page 385 of "Erskine May", you stressed the word "normally". Your interpretation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seems to mean that a declaration can be made at any time during an hon. Member's speech. If "normally" can be interpreted as any time between zero and half an hour before an interest is declared, should that not be referred to Mr. Speaker, and from him to the appropriate Select Committee, for clarification and further definition of the word "normally"? I am only asking——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. It is primarily for the hon. Member concerned to judge whether he has an interest to declare and, if so, when to declare it. If the hon. Gentleman believes that the rules need changing in any way, it is not for the Chair to change them. The Chair is the servant of the House. As I have said more than once, the hon. Gentleman should write to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests and ask him to consider the matter.

Mr. Summerson: In the light of what has been said, I must also declare that I am the chairman of an insurance broking company. Since I took over the chairmanship of that company, I have drawn no remuneration from it.

If I may now continue with my speech——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) has declared an interest in Palatine Properties Ltd. and in an insurance company, and he has told the House that he has received no income from them since he was elected to the House in 1987. I do not want to accuse the hon. Gentleman of misleading the House, but he should explain the capital value of Palatine Properties Ltd. and what interest that company has in demolition——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Those are matters for debate, not points of order for the Chair.

Mr. Summerson: With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to tell the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) all about Palatine Properties. As its sole assets, that company has the freehold of six blocks of flats in Fulham. All the flats have been sold on long leases, and they produce an income by way of ground rent of £1,250 a year. The leases expire some time well into the next century.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman will be going around with a hat in a minute.

Mr. Summerson: I am not sure whether my bank manager will be very happy with me baring the company's soul in public this way. The company has an overdraft of about £15,000 or £16,000. When we bought the freehold of the properties in December 1986, we paid £9,600 for them. Perhaps Opposition Members will now understand why I draw no income from the company and also why my bank manager frequently has nightmares.

Mr. Corbyn: This is fascinating, and reveals the depth of the hon. Gentleman's interest in high finance. However, he has not told us about the increased capital value of the blocks of flats since they were bought out or what interest he has in the demolition of those properties and how much he would stand to gain as the owner of the freehold should they be demolished.

Mr. Summerson: I can answer the hon. Gentleman very easily. The freeholders do not have the right to knock

[Mr. Summerson]

down the blocks. All the flats have been sold on long leases and I imagine that the leases probably begin to expire around 2070, when I do not expect to be around.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree——

Mr. Cryer: Where has the hon. Gentleman been all morning?

Mr. Stern: I have been listening to the debate.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the value of the reversion, about which Opposition Members are so jealous, is probably less than the original purchase price?

Mr. Summerson: In the present market, that is probably so. That is why, as I have already explained, I have taken no remuneration from the company.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not in the least interested in the hon. Gentleman's property interests—I am well aware that many Conservative Members are more representative of property interests than of their constituents—but is it not the case that, if the hon. Gentleman were to sit down and if other hon. Members were to remain seated, we could make progress on the Radiation Exposed Crown Employees (Benefits) Bill? That Bill concerns the health of ex-service men—people who have served this country well in the past. Is it not morally correct for Conservative Members to pass the Planning Permission (Demolition of Houses) Bill so that we may debate the next Bill?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That must be a matter for the hon. Member who has the floor. I call Mr. Summerson.

Mr. Summerson: The Bill has strong implications for housing and for housing the homeless. That is an important matter. My hon. Friends who cheered the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) have already had their say. I arrived in the Chamber at half past 9 this morning. I put my name into Mr. Speaker's Office last night. I have prepared my speech, and I intend to deliver it.

Mr. Dykes: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Summerson: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend.

I dislike this addition to planning law. Section 22(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 gives the famous definition of development:

"the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land."

It is quite clear that those who drew up the legislation had in mind positive building activities. They did not envisage demolition coming within that definition of development.

I was going to declare my interest as a chartered surveyor and so on, but I have already done so at inordinate length. When I practised as a chartered surveyor, I gained some experience of planning matters. It was quite clear that many local authorities—the political complexion did not matter—had a fundamental opposition to people who wanted to carry out developments. I would often find that, although planning officers were perfectly constructive and helpful, when a matter got to the planning committee, at the least whiff of opposition from local people, the planning committee would turn tail and run. That was an abrogation of responsibility.

Now, of course, I understand that the committee members were worried about local opposition, and possibly opposition to their seats on the council, but they were given a duty to deal with planning applications. Many planning applications were ultimately for the benefit of their area.

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman's last comment is unfair to members of local authorities who serve on planning committees. Many councillors are fully aware of the circumstances in their wards. If they wish to use their experience, is it not right that they should oppose planning officers to defend the interests of the people they serve? Why does the hon. Gentleman deride members of local authorities in such a way?

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman is not being altogether fair. I never derided those councillors—I said that they should have a sharper sense of their own responsibilities. Simply because some people in their area might not like the idea of a development, councillors often say, "Oh well, we won't bother to pass it; we'll oppose it. We know perfectly well that the developers will get it on appeal. We also know perfectly well that the development is probably in the best interests of the area." Because of the local opposition, councillors are often not prepared to deal with these issues. That was my complaint.

Planning law is directly responsible for driving up property prices all over the country because it restricts the supply of land. That is the reason we have seen the rise of the pressure group SANE Planning, in this very place. It exists to protect the green belt and the countryside. I am sure that most people would agree with that. However, that process can be taken too far. If the supply of land is restricted, the price of that land will obviously increase. Therefore, the price of the buildings on that land will also increase. In turn, prices are driven up all over the country and young people, often setting out on their first job, cannot find anywhere to live.

That problem is not confined to country areas; the position is exactly the same in the towns and cities. For that very reason, property prices in my own constituency of Walthamstow have been driven up and up over the past 10 or 15 years and young people are finding that they cannot afford too buy. Those who were fortunate enough or clever enough not to buy at the height of the boom now have good opportunities and many are taking advantage of them. If we regard what is happening now as part of the cyclical downturn, to be followed at some time by the cyclical upturn, once again many young people will not be able to afford to buy a home.

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend's earlier comments about his property company sounded interesting, although perhaps it is not a particularly attractive investment. I have been having discussions with some of my hon. Friends. The worrying aspect of all this is whether, under the latest company laws, my hon. Friend is presiding over a property company that is insolvent or approaching insolvency. If so, as hon. Friends of our hon. Friend, we are all concerned about our hon. Friend's political welfare and, of course, we want to avoid a by-election. Perhaps my hon. Friend could give us some clarification.

Mr. Summerson: I wondered whether any of my colleagues would pick up that point. On the face of it, it sounds as though what my hon. Friend has said is the case. However, I can assure him that the present valuation of the properties and the present state of the overdraft are just about in step. As long as the income from the property continues to be paid to the bank and does not come into my pocket, all will be well.

Some of my hon. Friends have referred to the trouble in suburban areas, and I can fully understand their worries. However, we must bear in mind the fact that many of those suburban areas were developed in the 1920s and the 1930s on a spacious scale, when the demand for housing was very different and much less than it is today. We should also think about how those who were already living on the urban fringe must have been furious when a developer arrived on the scene and said, "I am going to build further out and spoil your view." To a large extent, what lies at the root of the problem is that people do not like having their areas "despoiled" as they would see it, which I can fully understand. However, they should understand that those houses were built all those years ago for a completely different life style and many must now make way for others, for the different life style of today.

That point goes back to what I said at the beginning about the history of human settlements in various places. Settlements and people's requirements change over the years. Many large Victorian houses, for example, have now been turned into flats. Local people are happy to see, at least from the outside, the house look exactly as it has always looked. Often the quality of the accommodation inside is not particularly high, because the houses were never designed to be turned into flats. As a result, problems arise—for example, of sound transmission through the walls or floors. That gives rise to considerable problems.

Some larger and older houses have outrun their span. They were put up for a particular purpose and have fulfilled that purpose well. But the demand today, particularly with the younger population, is not so much for large houses as for smaller flats, so much denigrated by both Conservative and Opposition Members. Young people have to start somewhere, and they want smaller flats. They want to know that their flats are solidly built. They do not want to be in intimate contact with their neighbours through listening willy-nilly to what their neighbours are up to on the other side of the wall.

If the Bill becomes law, there would be more deliberate neglect of properties. An unscrupulous developer may not wish to go through all the hassle of applying for planning permission. After doing his homework, he may find that the local council and residents are hostile to the plans. He may simply buy a house and deliberately neglect it. He may leave it open and empty.

The next thing that will probably happen is that squatters will come in. After that, there will probably be a fire or something of that nature. The owner will then be able to knock that house down without having to put any effort into the house. He may simply decide to take the roof off and let natural deterioration take its toll, to such an extent that the house must be demolished.

Do we really want to freeze all our houses in a time warp? That is the problem with the Bill. I understand what my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood is getting at—the anxieties of his constituents who support the Bill.

Mr. Clay: Does the hon. Gentleman feel easy with the fact that the Government will not have to say even a word in opposition to the Bill which will follow this one? Frankly, they do not have a word or an argument to put forward. That is why they have put up people such as the hon. Member for Walthhamstow (Mr. Summerson) to talk to this Bill. Does he really feel comfortable with that? I ask him on the record whether he understands the feelings of the service men and their families who would be affected by the Bill that is to follow?

Mr. Summerson: I came to the House today to contribute to the debate. That is what I am doing. The hon. Gentleman may complain bitterly about me and my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), who spoke before me. Why did he not start to complain from 9.30 am onwards about other hon. Gentlemen who spoke?

Mr. Wilkinson: Because we made short speeches.

Mr. Summerson: My hon. Friend talks about short speeches. I began my speech at 2 pm, but I have had precious little time to deliver my remarks, with all the interruptions and interventions and points of order.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that at least half his speech was full of interruptions and filibustering from Labour Members? Labour Members have prevented the second Bill from being debated this morning.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it not be wise to put on the record that the reason why there were so many interruptions in the hon. Gentleman's speech was his failure to declare his interest in his opening sentence?

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman's remark is open to question. I declared my interest, as the House demands. As far as I was aware, I had to declare it in the course of my speech, and I have done so.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is unfortunate that we have not had time to hear from hon. Members who represent areas outside London who could have spoken about the severe difficulties faced by our constituents when trying to buy property in London. If they were successful, that would do a great deal to increase mobility of labour and reduce unemployment in the north. It is a great pity that we have not heard from hon. Members representing areas other than London.

Mr. Summerson: My hon. Friend is right and, in common with me, he has been here since 9.30 am. He has sat through the entire debate and I am afraid that he has not had the chance to make his own speech.

Mr. Boyes: I have just been outside to Central Lobby to talk to the nuclear veterans. They are disgusted at the performance of Conservative Members and find it an absolute disgrace. All those who have filibustered today should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but I have done no such thing. I have been on my feet for perhaps half an hour and——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

To be resumed on Friday 9 March.

Private Members' Bills

RADIATION EXPOSED CROWN EMPLOYEES (BENEFITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Friday 9 March, because the Government Whip objected.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

CAR TELEPHONES (SAFETY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Friday 6 July. Again, that is the responsibility of the Government.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

HARBOURS, DOCKS AND PIERS CLAUSES ACT 1847 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 April.

PROTECTION OF BADGER SETTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Friday 9 March. On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must complete the orders.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

CHANNEL TUNNEL ACT 1987 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): As the Government Whip objected, then Friday 23 March.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 23 March.

ACCESS TO HEALTH RECORDS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [23 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

GREYHOUND BETTING LEVY BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [16 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

REGISTRATION OF COMMERCIAL LOBBYING INTERESTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 March.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 12th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Brooke relating to Northern Ireland may be proceeded with until Seven o'clock, and at that hour, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall put the Question thereon.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I moved the Access to Health Records Bill on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), I believe that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) objected. Perhaps you could inquire of him whether he is aware that his Government have said that they support the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We cannot debate the matter now.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton); On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I actually missed the vote—like the nuclear test veterans, I had the door slammed in my face. I was addressing a meeting on behalf of another hon. Member and I got the first train back to the House. I was ambling along from the station to the House and I was not notified that there was a Division until it was much too late. Although I ran, I had the door slammed in my face. Will you consider some sort of mechanism for a bell or similar system to operate in all the precincts of the House so that fit hon. Members, like myself, can run and cast our vote in a Division instead of missing it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I doubt whether the bells are defective, but I will certainly inquire into the matter.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I moved the Second Reading of the Protection of Badger Setts Bill I certainly did not hear anyone on the Government Treasury Bench object. I understand that this act of private enterprise against his own Government was the effort of the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). I wanted to ensure that I did not get the name wrong because I do not want the mail to go to the wrong person subsequently.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Bill was objected to and we carried out the normal procedures.

Whaling

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.34 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The subject of whaling arouses great passion and anger both in the House and outside, and I am as prone to such feelings as anyone else. On this occasion, uniquely in all the times that I have spoken in the House, my anger is directed not at Her Majesty's Government but at the Japanese Government and, to a lesser extent, the Norwegian Government.

Whales are probably the most remarkable creatures living on earth. They evoke great awe and fascination among the vast majority of us. They belong to a unique class of marine mammals which have lived on earth much longer than we have—50 million years.

The blue whale is the largest creature ever to have lived on the planet—far greater than even the largest of the dinosaurs. The brain of the sperm whale is the largest of any creature on earth. Toothed whales use a form of sonar for echo location, which is up to 95 per cent. more accurate than the most sophisticated sonar developed by humans.

Despite its huge size of some of the 80 species of whale, dolphin and porpoise, whales appear to have gentle natures with little natural aggression and a tendency to enjoy play. They are intelligent creatures. In addition to having highly developed brains, there is clear evidence that they communicate through a complex system of sounds. Anyone who has listened to the song of the hump-back whale, with its weaving of those intricate and evolving patterns of music, knows just how wonderful and evocative it is.

Studies reveal complex social behaviour and gregariousness among whales. A school of whales will protect its young and wounded—a tendency which has been used by professional whalers in the past to increase their kill. They exploit the kindness of the whales and thus accentuate the barbarity of man against them. In some species, a calfless female will assist a mother in caring for her calf. In short, whales are beautiful, intelligent, social, caring, gentle and mysterious creatures.

What do we do with these wonderful creatures? We slaughter them. All whaling is unacceptable and barbaric. The slaughter of whales is an evil crime—as evil as genocide. Over recent years world opinion has, fortunately, vastly reduced the killing of whales, but not before many species approached extinction.

In 1982, the International Whaling Commission, the IWC, passed an indefinite ban on commercial whaling, effective from 1986. My reason for raising this issue now —apart from the fact that it is a matter of continuing concern for me and for colleagues on both sides of the House and throughout the country—is that this year, I believe in June, the IWC is to review its original decision and decide whether to lift the ban on certain stocks or leave it entirely in situ.

As I understand it—the Minister probably has more up-to-date information—Japan, Norway and possibly Iceland are expected to seek commercial quotas for Antarctic and North Atlantic minke whales at the IWC meeting in June. They must not be allowed to succeed.

The scientific committee of the IWC reported last year that to complete its testing of procedures for the harvesting of whales would take until at least 1991. I apologise for using the word "harvesting" but that is the one that appears in the official documentation. I prefer the word "slaughter." The scientific committee has opposed any temporary measure for catch limits to be set in the interim. Nevertheless, Japan and Norway have made it clear that they intend to press for interim quotas. When the Minister replies I want him to tell us that the British Government will continue to resist such a request.

Further proposals for the slaughter of whales under scientific permit are expected again from Japan and Norway. Both countries have continued to kill minke whales throughout the moratorium, despite repeated requests by the IWC and the resolutions that have been passed and adopted against those programmes. The British Government have an excellent record of opposing spurious research, and I trust that that record will be maintained at the June meeting.

Scientific whaling is an abuse of language—it is a way of continuing restricted commercial whaling under the camouflage of science. Those are strong words, but in my view the Japanese are acting in a criminally irresponsible fashion by pursuing this so-called scientific whaling. At this very moment the Japanese are involved in a programme of whale slaughter in the Antarctic in which 300 minke whales will be killed as part of a so-called feasibility study arising from their original proposal, rejected by the IWC, for a programme which envisaged the slaughter of 825 minke whales and 50 sperm whales each year for the next 10 years. A total of 10,000 whales would be killed.

That is not science; it is systematic butchering with a legal technicality woven into it. Given that it is called scientific whaling it is funny how almost all the meat from the slaughter seems to end up on dinner plates in Tokyo and other Japanese cities. I am not a marine biologist, but I can tell the Japanese scientific community what the result of the slaughter of 300 minke whales will be—there will be 300 fewer minke whales than when the Japanese started their programme.

At an IWC meeting, the Japanese whaling commissioner, Mr. Kuzno Shima, said that the anti-whaling movement of which I, like many other hon. Members, am an active member, was racist because it was an attempt by the meat-eating culture to dominate the fish-eating culture. I reject such absurd and offensive language out of hand. Despite all the scientific whaling over the years by the Japanese it appears, in any case, that Mr. Shima still has not discovered the basic fact that whales are not fish. They are mammals. So much for scientific whaling.

The Japanese have no right to pursue their preferred eating habits at the price of the destruction of the world's whale population. Because they have been partially frustrated by the various whaling bans, the Japanese have been slaughtering the small cetaceans which are not covered by the IWC. Last year, about 40,000 Dall's porpoises were slaughtered. Baird's beaked whales and pilot whales have been slaughtered in the 200-mile fishing zone around Japan. The Japanese have said that this slaughter is being undertaken because they have not been allowed their quota of the larger whales. That gives the lie to the nonsense that their slaughter of minke whales is somehow in the name of or interests of science.

The Japanese have informed all commissioners that if they are not given the quota that they require, the Japanese Government will be unable to find any reason to stop their

fishermen killing minke whales. That is straightforward blackmail and I hope that the Minister will make it clear that the British Government will resist it.

I want the Government to consider imposing appropriate sanctions, in consultation with other EEC nations, against Japan until it respects world opinion about the whales. The Japanese and Norwegians do not own the whales. The whales belong to the planet, to all of us, and to slaughter them is a crime against the planet which should not be tolerated by civilised people.

It appears that the present stock of whales is much smaller than recent estimates suggest. The Minister may have more up-to-date information than I have about this. We must end the slaughter of all whales large and small, before we remove from the planet one of the most wondrous and beautiful creatures ever to have lived upon it.

2.44 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have permission to speak from the hon. Member for Newham North-West (Mr. Banks) and from the Minister?

Mr. Greenway: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall be brief.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on his splendid initiative and his eloquent speech on this important matter. The Japanese attitude to whales is all that the hon. Gentleman says it is —barbaric and disgraceful. That same attitude extends to other animals. Beautiful horses are left to die in dereliction. I say humbly to the Japanese that they need to rethink their whole attitude and find some compassion for all animals, especially the whale.

As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has said, whales have almost human levels of communication, but they also have human levels of suffering. They know when they are about to be slaughtered and they suffer as any human being faced with murder must suffer. They are aware of what is going on. Nobody can say that the Japanese need the money that they get from the acquisition of 300 minke whales. Even if they did, that would not justify their embarking upon the slaughter of animals that suffer in the way that whales do. It is totally wrong and barbaric and the Japanese should desist from it.

Our Government must oppose any lifting of the moratorium. The Norwegians and the Japanese can find elsewhere the food and other resources that they obtain from whales. The world does not need food from slaughtered whales, nor does it need anything else that can be obtained from the carcases of whales. I call upon the Government to support the eloquent case advanced by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West for a world ban on the slaughter of whales.

2.48 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have permission to speak from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West and from the Minister?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I, too, shall be brief.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for his eloquent speech and I congratulate him on his determination and persistence on behalf of the whale and other endangered species.

I believe honestly and deeply that the treatment of whales is an example of the evil intelligence of humankind in relation to the rest of the natural world. We have seen greed of the most impossible kind descending on the Arctic and the Antarctic to destroy the most intelligent and beautiful creatures that the planet can produce.

History records the way in which whales dominated the oceans, and it documents the intelligence of these animals. At one time whales were fairly common in the north Atlantic and even in the North sea. The diaries of John Evelyn written in the 17th century record the fascination of thousands of Londoners who rushed to Deptford creek when, tragically, a whale was washed up there and died. People stared in awe at this wonderful and beautiful creature. The whale does not have a killer instinct and is not an evil animal. It does not live, as John Evelyn said, on slime—it lives on plankton.

We are in the process of destroying much of the planet through destruction of the ozone layer, leading to the greenhouse effect, and the destruction of life. The whale is an example of how such destruction happens. As the ozone layer is destroyed the plankton in the Southern ocean will die and the whales will lose much of their food. Last year we opposed the Antarctic Minerals Bill because we feared that it would lead to pollution of the Southern ocean and damage the whales' food supply.

The Government must oppose any extension of whaling of any type, scientific or otherwise, and I hope and trust that they will do so. But we must go further. Countries which engage in the barbarity of so-called scientific whaling, which in reality is crude commercialism of the nastiest kind, deserve retribution from us all and we must bring every possible sanction to bear against them. If we do not take care of our planet and our environment, and of animals such as the whale, mankind will suffer and our planet will die because we have not cared for the natural environment that we all share.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I welcome the tone of the debate insofar as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said that it does not concern a political matter. My remarks will support that point of view.

It may be helpful to the House if I outline the present situation. Three countries undertake whaling on a significant commercial scale. They are Japan, Norway and Iceland. There is also a certain amount of what one might describe as aboriginal whaling. That is covered by Alaska. The latest figures show that 41 bowhead whales were taken in 1989-90. In the Soviet Union, there is an agreement for catching 179 grey whales, which are caught commercially and then used in an artisanal manner.

In Greenland, the take of fin and minke whales is limited to 190 for the two years 1990 and 1991. Three whales will be taken in St. Vincent. Norway has announced that its scientific whaling will be reduced to a maximum of five minke this year. I have no doubt that that reflected certain pressures on Norway, but we none the less

[Mr. David Curry]

welcome the fact that its take has fallen to an extremely low level. Iceland, which has completed a four-year programme that last year saw a take of 68 fin whales and no sei whales, has announced that it will undertake no research whaling in 1990. It is certainly not our intention that it should be replaced by commercial whaling.

Mr. Harry Greenway: What is the significance of Norway's announcement that it will take only five minke this year? Why cannot Norway take none at all?

Mr. Curry: I am unable to interpret the Norwegian Government's intentions, but I know that Norway was under significant pressure from its traditional whaling population. It may have made the judgment that to go for zero whaling would have been unacceptable in political terms and reached a compromise that will in practical terms, I suspect, amount to the same thing as zero whaling. Norway has said that it will take a maximum of five minke whales. When I met the Norwegian Fisheries Minister, I suggested to her that the correct number would be zero.

Japan did not observe the moratorium until 1988, and in 1987 it announced a programme for the following year of 825 whales for a so-called "research" programme. I qualify the word "research" quite deliberately. That was modified to a "pilot" programme in which about 500 whales were taken. Japan announced a programme for 1988 of 300 catches, and I understand that the final take was 241. Early last year, this country circulated a resolution calling for that programme to be halted. A postal ballot took place among all International Whaling Commission members, as opposed to just those attending the conference. We fell one vote short of the necessary majority to pass that resolution.

In June last year, Japan announced a programme of 400 catches. We again sponsored a resolution hostile to that programme, which led to the programme being modified to a catch of 300 whales, plus or minus 10 per cent. In the International Whaling Commission, we have sought to clarify what is meant by the word "research", which in my view is now being used in a rather too permissive manner. The scientists will submit evidence to the meeting that is to be held at the end of June and at the beginning of July in The Netherlands, when they will seek to clarify what is meant.

Altogether, three ballots have been organised at meetings of the International Whaling Commission. Two were launched between meetings, and the United Kingdom sponsored or co-sponsored every one of them. I am happy to join the hon. Member for Newham, North-West in saying that the matter goes right across the Chamber and that there is no political division between us.

Perhaps it will be helpful if I describe the line that we shall take at the forthcoming meeting of the IWC. The moratorium will continue unless there is a three quarter majority to lift it. It is a certainty, as much as anything can be a certainty, that the moratorium will continue. It is certainly our intention that that will be the case. The scientists are producing comprehensive assessments of the three main whale stocks—the Pacific gray, Antarctic minke, and Atlantic minke.

In a gradual programme of tightening up, we are looking for sensible management procedures to safeguard whales. We want a proper impact assessment of the actions that others are demanding. We have an interest in ensuring that we keep all the whaling nations within the International Whaling Commission, for we do not want member countries to leave it and to resume whaling activity as freelancers, when as members of the IWC they are subject to certain constraints. We are quite clear that our purpose in the commission is to ensure that that activity continues on its current downward curve.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned small-boat whaling. The Japanese stopped that as part of the moratorium, but last year they sought to exploit minke off their coast. The International Whaling Commission declined permission for that, but as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West clearly and correctly stated, the Japanese have gone for the Baird's beaked whale and Dall's porpoises. They reported a take of 40,000 porpoises in 1988, but we understand that the figure was lower in 1989. We firmly believe that the IWC should regulate all cetacea of that nature, including dolphins and porpoises.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am a member of the Council of Europe. I moved several amendments to a report from one of its committees to extend the jurisdiction of the IWC to all cetacea. I hope that the Government will support that proposal in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Curry: The Government agree that the IWC must extend its competence. We simply do not accept the argument that, because we put pressure on the Japanese to reduce their take of minke and other whales, they have a legitimate right to take different species. We do not think that there is a relationship between those two. We believe that they should take fewer of all species.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned the meat of whales ending up in high-class restaurants in Tokyo. I understand that it is claimed that it ends up in a school meals programme, but, wherever it ends up, the exploitation of these mammals is condemned by all public opinion with which we are in touch. The competence of the IWC in this sector is not as defined as in the whaling sector. We are therefore seeking to emphasise and to improve that competence.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West, who I know is interested in these matters, might be interested if I address myself specifically to the subject of Pacific drift netting. I know that that is not an IWC issue, but it falls within the category of over-extravagant forms of exploitation of resources. Drift nets are designed to catch tuna. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea are the main perpetrators. The nets can be 30 miles long and 15m deep. That deadly laced curtain catches species in an unregulated manner.

The number of Japanese vessels using drift nets has increased significantly. However, there is movement that is worth recording. About seven or eight months ago, there was a conference in Tarawa. At the subsequent Commonwealth conference, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister endorsed its statement, which sought to control this exploitation. There was a resolution in the United Nations sponsored by the United States, in November, against drift net fishing. Last year, the UN agreed two important measures to cut fishing and to ban the drift net technique by June 1991 unless better management was in place in the south Pacific region and to call for a moratorium on all large-scale drift net fishing

on the high seas by June 1992, subject to the same condition of effective conservation management techniques.

There is a slight problem, because although Taiwan is one of the offenders, it is not recognised in the United Nations and is therefore excluded from discussions. We have supported the UN resolution because that large form of indiscriminate fishing falls in the same category as the wilful over-exploitation of whales.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister agree that international decisions must be taken on fishing policy and that the basic decision should be sustainability of the species being fished? Drift netting makes it impossible to monitor that because one does not know what will be killed, even if one is looking for a sustainable species of fish to catch.

Mr. Curry: That is certainly the case. One of the ways forward on drift netting is to find out more about the tuna stock and how it behaves, and to develop far more selective gear to take tuna without having an effect on other creatures. In that sense, the approach does not differ at all from the attempts to improve conservation techniques for haddock and cod in the North sea. It is a question of trying to be more selective, and having a more scientific and accepted basis for the stocks and the level of exploitation that they will suffer. That seems to be the way forward.

In those three areas we have been able to record progress and we should all have liked to see it go faster. It is important to ensure that all the nations are brought within the scope of the IWC on whales and cetaceans, so that they are at least subject to the pressure that can be exercised there.

The figures show that there has been an improvement and, of course, that improvement must continue. We estimate that between 1985 and 1987, Japan took just under 2,300 whales of all species—that is, whales proper, not the smaller mammals. Between 1986 and 1989, the average of minke, which is the principal species fished, was down to 258. The decline was perceptible. Iceland, between 1983 and 1985, took 411, and with last year, which was the last year in which there was a scientific take, the average figure was down to 90 animals. Iceland has said that it will not be taking any more this year. There has been continual pressure.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West asked me whether the British Government would continue to take the lead in this matter. I affirm that it is our intention to do so. We recognise that when we approach these matters, we must respect two critieria. The first is the emotional impact that this issue has on our own public opinion. It is an issue on which it is perfectly legitimate to express an emotional as well as a scientific reaction. In the IWC, we must argue the case, persuade people and win a majority. We have to be able to translate that emotional feeling into a scientific and political thrust to win allies and to gain the argument. We have to be able to argue by persuasion. If we do not, countries may simply renounce their participation in the organisation. It is important that we should say that being successful ultimately in continuing the decline in exploitation is important to us. If that means that there is a time scale longer than some of us would like, it is still important to have a persistent, consistent attitude through which we try to build a greater, effective scientific resource of information.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West for initiating the debate. We agree across the House on this subject. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). We can say that the House speaks for the British public on the issue. It certainly speaks for the junior members of the British public. Few of us will have had schools in our constituencies which do not take a particular interest in the fate of this unique resource of our planet. I subscribe to everything that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has said about the unique beauty and mystery of a beast that was here a long time before we inhabited the planet. I hope that we can continue to coexist with it and respect it for its particular qualities for as long as the human race has the advantage and privilege of inhabiting this planet.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 5 March 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners (Income)

1. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the increase in pensioners' average net incomes from *(a)* 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* 1979 to date.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Between 1974 and 1979, pensioners' average total net income rose by 3 per cent. in real terms. Newly available figures show that between 1979 and 1987 it rose by more than 30 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Harris: Given the significant difference between those two figures, will my right hon. Friend take it from me that the substantial record of this Government is far more important than the rhetoric of the Opposition, especially as the figures show that the Labour party has a miserable record in this important area?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. Taking the picture as a whole, it is certainly striking how much better pensioners have done under this Government than under the previous Labour Government. We have sought, by using income-related benefits, to assist, in particular, pensioners who do not have savings income and occupational pensions.

Mr. Battle: Will not the Secretary of State admit that the removal of the transitional arrangements for housing benefit has meant that this year's increased pension for pensioners on income support has been wiped out? They are worse off this year—with the increase—than they were last year. Is not that the reality for many pensioners today?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is talking about the housing benefit transitional protection arrangements, but the change in those that is intended to take place in April represents a smaller proportion of the pension increase this year than last, so his point does not stand up to examination.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Although I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what has been achieved, will he look carefully at the position of the wartime generation of pensioners, many of whom were unable to save or to own their own homes, and many of whom have not shared fully in the increased standard of living of the vast majority of pensioners?

Mr. Newton: Let me make two points. First, the figures to which I referred show that the proportion of pensioners in the lowest fifth of income distribution fell sharply between 1979 and 1987. Secondly, as I said in answer to the first supplementary question, we have sought to direct extra help to those who do not have savings and occupational pensions income.

Mr. Flynn: The Minister will realise that we are less impressed by the figure of 30 per cent. because we read yesterday that top people's incomes have increased by 28 per cent. in a single year. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that under Labour basic pensions increased by 20 per cent., whereas under this Government they have increased by a miserly 2 per cent? Is not the truth that the rich are becoming richer on a prodigious scale while the poor are becoming poorer very rapidly? Is not the Minister filled with self-disgust at his role? Is not he tempted to leave office and do a runner or, as we say in Wales, do a Walker?

Mr. Newton: On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I congratulate him on his ingenuity in asking the question and return a firm no to it. As to the rest of his question, he cannot have been listening to what I said. The other point that emerges from the 30 per cent. figure is that pensioners' incomes have been rising faster than those of the population at large.

Income-related Benefits

2. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional help is being provided for families in receipt of income-related benefits.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): As a result of the reforms in April 1988, we provided an extra £200 million for low-income families with children. A further £70 million was provided under last April's uprating. From this coming April, we are providing additional help to less well-off families amounting to some £75 million in a full year, including help for families with disabled children and, through the social fund, maternity payment for expectant mothers. That brings the total amount of extra help provided for families with children in receipt of income-related benefits to over £350 million a year in real terms since April 1988.

Mr. Taylor: My right hon. Friend gives some extremely welcome figures. As a general uprating of child benefit would not have helped those receiving income-related benefits and family credit, does my right hon. Friend agree that the specific targeted help under the family premium for those families is particularly important and more likely to hold them together, which is very important in this day and age?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend. The help that we shall introduce in April with the family premium, help within the family credit scheme over and above compensating for inflation, extra help with housing benefit, the lone-parent premium—which is being improved in housing benefit and community charge benefit—and the earnings disregard are all examples of how we seek to target help on those who need it most.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister come clean and admit that many people are suffering since he abolished single

payments and replaced them with the social fund? Will he explain why a woman with five children in my constituency, who is being rehoused because of domestic violence, has been refused money under the social fund to buy beds for her children? She would have received that money under the single payments scheme.

Mr. Winnick: Disgraceful.

Mrs. Mahon: It is disgraceful, as my hon. Friend says. Why does not the Minister examine the failure of the social fund?

Mr. Scott: There are several questions later on the Order Paper about the social fund. The decisions are taken by independent social fund officers. Anyone who is dissatisfied with a decision can ask for the case to be reviewed and, if necessary, investigated by a social fund inspector.

Residential Care Homes

3. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding state support for pensioners in residential care homes.

Mr. Scott: We have received a significant number of representations. Part of our response has been to provide an extra £100 million to increase all the national income support limits for people in residential care and nursing homes from this April. Current spending on income support payments to people in homes is now well in excess of £1 billion a year.

Mr. Colvin: The House will be pleased to note the action already taken by the Government to close the gap between the cost of nursing homes—particularly following the welcome and substantial pay increase to nurses two years ago—and the cost to old people of living in those homes which is assisted by the Department of Social Security through income support.

Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the Government's proposed top-up arrangements do not apply to existing residents in nursing homes? Will he therefore join my hon. Friends and myself in lobbying the Department of Health to extend that help to existing residents of nursing homes, not just to new entrants?

Mr. Scott: I hope that my hon. Friend welcomes the fact that under the new arrangement people under and over pension age will be helped. With regard to the existing cases, we continue to have discussions with our colleagues in the Department of Health, but I cannot comment further than that today.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Minister confirm that almost half the residents in residential care do not have their fees paid in full, even though they are on income support? Will we have to wait for evictions from those homes before the Government change their policy?

Mr. Scott: No, I do not think so. Our commitment to improvement in residential care has been proved by the way in which we have allowed expenditure to increase from £10 million when we came to office to £1·1 billion now, by the continued growth in the population of those in residential and nursing homes and by the something like 10 per cent. per annum increase in the number of homes providing such care.

Sir David Price: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the report of the Select Committee on Social Services which deals directly with the problem and makes a series of recommendations with which I will not detain the House now? Those recommendations require an early response before the Social Security Bill comes back to the Floor of the House.

Mr. Scott: We received the report only on Friday. I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise that we want to give it rather longer consideration than just the past few days. I recognise the concern and feeling about the subject, not least as a result of my two appearances before the Select Committee on Social Services, of which my hon. Friend is a member. We are considering the matter carefully, but I do not believe that the Government can simply write a blank cheque to meet any charges, however high.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware of the increasing insistence of local authority leaders of all political persuasions that their lack of funds for community care is forcing more people into residential care who could live in the community with adequate local services and that the poll tax will compound their problems? Will he at least ensure that income support payments keep pace with the charges agreed by local authorities for new residents?

Mr. Scott: I am not sure whether I can agree that. We introduced the new arrangements for community care which are part of the legislation currently before the House precisely because we believed that there was a perverse incentive for people to go into residential care, even when it was not the most suitable place for them to be. Making extra sources available for local authorities to provide care in the community is the right way to ensure that judgments can be made in the interests of patients or clients.

Pensioners (Income)

4. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures he has for the change in pensioners' incomes from savings.

Mr. Newton: Newly available figures show that between 1979 and 1987, pensioners' average income from savings more than doubled in real terms.

Mrs. Roe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. What proportion of retired people receive income from occupational pensions?

Mr. Newton: The proportion of pensioners overall who have income from occupational pensions is just over half, but among more recently retired pensioners the figure is now nearly three quarters.

Mr. Winnick: Instead of trying to defend the shabby way in which pensioners have been treated by the Government, will the Secretary of State explain why, time and again, pensioners are penalised because they have saved during their working lives? If they have accumulated a sum of money, even quite a modest one by present-day standards, they are penalised in receiving benefit and unable to get rebates. As the Secretary of State and the Minister are well known for being somewhat wet in the Tory party, why do not they have the guts to do what the Secretary of State for Wales has done?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I may take the opportunity to remind the hon. Gentleman that, less than two years ago, the amount of capital that people could have and still receive supplementary benefit was only £3,000.

Ms. Short: That is because they increased it to £10,000.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady should check her facts before making sedentary interventions.

There is now a taper from £3,000 to £6,000. The hon. Gentleman knows that the limit for housing benefit was raised to £8,000.

Mr. David Nicholson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people who thought that they had made adequate provision for their retirement saw their savings devastated because of the rate of inflation under the Labour Government in the 1970s? Is he further aware that there is concern among Conservative Members about the savings threshold, particularly for community charge benefit? It appears to be a tax on thrift and prudence, because retired people may lose all claim to rebates if they have made efforts to save during their working lives.

Mr. Newton: I recognise that the level at which capital limits are set is a matter for judgment. Our judgment was to increase them about two years ago, especially in relation to housing benefit and rate rebates. I hope that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that the more generous arrangements for community charge benefit than for rate rebates, in that it has a lower taper, will significantly help many people.

Child Benefit

6. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of uprating child benefit to bring it to the same level in real terms as prevailed in 1984.

Mr. Newton: About £635 million net in the current financial year.

Ms. Primarolo: Is not the Secretary of State ashamed that child benefit, the most efficient way of getting money to families, is worth 19 per cent. less than it was in 1984? As the Government are notorious for leaks, will the Secretary of State confirm the rumour that the Government are to abolish child benefit, and will he make a statement on the matter, either before the Mid-Staffordshire by-election or before the next general election?

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do anything other than what we are committed to do and have been doing, which it to review the rate of child benefit each year in the light of all the circumstances and, of course, to devote considerable resources to assisting the least well-off families, as we have done on a large scale.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would not be sensible to use the enormous sum that he mentioned—two thirds of £1 billion—to assist not only the poorest families but some of the wealthiest in the country through child benefit uprating? If he wished to help the poorest families, would not it be wiser to make some modest change in the tax rules on benefits in kind to assist members of families who wish to get back to work?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend, with her characteristic ingenuity, makes a point which I shall need to transmit to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I shall ensure that it is drawn to his attention. In response to the first part of her question, over £1 billion of expenditure on child benefit goes to 1·75 million families whose incomes are over £20,000 a year.

Ms. Short: Is not it time that the Government came clean with mothers in Britain about their plans for the future of child benefit—a popular benefit with mothers at all income levels? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government's failure to uprate child benefit in line with inflation is depriving every child in Britain of £1·35 per week? Will he admit that the Government have breached their promise to the nation in the previous election manifesto? Does he agree that it would be hypocritical for a Government who have massively cut taxes for the rich to argue that child benefit should be means-tested when the effect of means-testing would be to deepen the poverty trap for women on low incomes wishing to return to work?

Mr. Newton: The answer to every part of the hon. Lady's question is no. We have faithfully maintained the commitment in the 1987 manifesto and at the same time directed substantial additional resources to helping the least well-off families with children. As a result of what will happen next month, about 1·5 million families, with one quarter of the nation's children, will do better than if we had uprated child benefit.

Mr. Kirkhope: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the extra £70 million that will become available in income-related benefits to a quarter of children will give them substantially more than if there had been a general increase in child benefit, which is surely inequitable now?

Mr. Newton: Yes, Sir.

Social Fund

9. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total social fund allocation by grant and loan for the current financial year; and what was the equivalent figure for the last year of the single payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on single payments in 1987-88 was £214 million with an average award of £77. The total social fund allocation to local offices for 1989-90 is £204 million with an average award of £203 for budgeting loans and £260 for community care grants.

Mr. Corbyn: Last week, the High Court ruled that the administration of the social fund was illegal. What plans do the Government have to ensure that sufficient social fund money in local social security offices is available to meet the needs of people in every community, and that there will be equity in decision-making throughout the country? Does he agree that the present system of administration of the social fund is blatantly unfair, has resulted in a great deal of misery and represents an enormous cut in social security expenditure? Will he revert to the previous system of statutory single payments so that people in genuine and desperate need can get the help that they require and need not rely on the discretion of a local office which is cash-limited?

Mr. Scott: I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman's description of the social fund. If he took the trouble to look at the figures that I gave to the House—indeed if he had listened to them—he would see that what he said was manifestly out of order. Nor do I recognise his description of the High Court decision. The court simply said that some guidance had been drawn in too prescriptive a manner. Nothing in the judgment undermined the fundamental principles of the social fund. The judge said that he understood that Parliament expected the social fund to be run under strict monetary limits. I see no need to respond in any positive way to the hon. Gentleman's questions.

Mr. McCrindle: Am I correct in thinking that about £3 million of additional resources have been directed to the social security offices under greatest pressure from claims under the social fund? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, irrespective of where one lives or the period of the fiscal year in which a claim is made, it means that, subject to all the conditions being satisfied, there should be no difficulty meeting the claims?

Mr. Scott: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend back to the House and confirm that what he says is true. We undertook to monitor the operation of the social fund when it was introduced and found £3 million extra to help 106 local offices that were under particular pressure. I cannot completely agree with the latter part of my hon. Friend's statement. Discretion, flexibility and targeting help on those who need it most may mean that different decisions will be taken in different parts of the country. However, our new procedures and the social fund inspectors seek to combine that discretion and flexibility with fairness.

Mr. Meacher: Having been found guilty by the High Court nearly a fortnight ago of operating the social fund illegally, why has the Secretary of State still not issued any revised guidance to end the illegality? Is he aware that contrary to what the Minister of State just said, Lord Justice Woolf declared that the Secretary of State has imposed budget restraints in mandatory terms that were inconsistent with the intended flexible nature of the scheme? When will the right hon. Gentleman remove those budget restraints on the relief of poverty which should never have been imposed in the first place?

Mr. Scott: Nothing in the jugment does anything to nullify the fact that social fund officers should have regard to the budget when making their decisions. The judgment stated that the guidance was an overriding priority when making those decisions. We have notified our local offices that for the time being the budget should continue to be taken into account but that it should not have an overriding impact. We are further considering what other action we may need to take in that area.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Government must take more concrete and positive action as a result of the High Court decision and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will do that with some urgency. It must be incompatible on the one hand to expect adjudication officers to use their discretion while on the other hand they run up against cash-limited budgets. Does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that it is a double indignity to be given approval for a social fund payment in principle and then to be told that its payment is impossible because the budget has been exhausted? That will simply lead to people being discouraged from making social fund applications in the future.

Mr. Scott: We wish to ensure that the Government come forward with proposals and we shall want to consider whether they will be purely administrative or will need some legislative underpinning. In essence, I want to combine budgetary limits with flexibility. I do not believe that they are incompatible. They can operate in the interests of the taxpayer and of claimants.

Mr. Rowe: Has my right hon. Friend heard a clear statement from any Opposition party that the implied suggestion that there should be no limit on the social fund is its policy?

Mr. Scott: The Labour party has suggested that it wants to return to the old system of single payments, under which 80 per cent. of the money went to fewer than 20 per cent. of the claimants, and where we had an open-ended budget that rocketed up. All hon. Members know from constituency experience that the single payment system was open to widespread abuse.

Family Incomes

11. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people live in families with incomes which are on, or within 40 per cent. above, the benefit level appropriate to their circumstances.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): The information requested used to be published in the low-income families tables, but these are no longer published because of technical shortcomings and methodological deficiencies. This was explained in the report of the technical review of low-income statistics. The last figures covering the period up to 1985 were published in May 1988 and are available in the Library.

Mr. Banks: Is not it true that the Government have ceased to collect statistics because they are so embarrassed about the number of people now in poverty? I understand that such figures have not been produced since 1985. How much has poverty increased under the Government? We understand that it has increased by 100 per cent. since 1979 and we believe that 10 million people now live in poverty. What is the truth? Does the Minister know? Should not the Minister be ashamed that this country's biggest growth industry appears to be the number of people in poverty?

Mrs. Shephard: As I have said, the Government ceased to use the low-income family tables because of technical shortcomings and methodological deficiencies. We did so because the same measure was used for defining poverty and for the means of relieving it. The obvious concurrence of that was a cut in benefits, leading to a reduction in the number of those in poverty. That was a ludicrous approach.

In response to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, all groups in the population have experienced an increase in their living standard over the past 10 years. Between 1981 and 1985, couples with children in the bottom decile had an increase of 8 per cent. There was an increase of 6 per cent. for those in the second bottom decile.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that the plain truth is that under the Conservative Government those with the lowest incomes have done extraordinarily well and far better than under the Labour Government, when they saw their real incomes hardly move? It has been realised throughout the world that the creation of wealth comes first and that its distribution comes second. Unless we get it in that order, we shall never help the poor.

Mrs. Shephard: The increase in the size of the social security budget is the direct result of the Government's successful economic policies. More than £1 billion a week is spent on social security benefits. That amounts to £20 per week for every man, woman and child.

Mr. Meacher: Is it the Government's intention that the 7 million to 8 million adult claimants on income support will have to pay a sizeable chunk of poll tax? Is the Minister aware that the Government's 20 per cent. personal allowance applies only to their laughable guideline poll tax figure of £278, so that those on the poverty line will have to pay poll tax on at least a further £100? The Prime Minister said that the poorest would be protected from the poll tax. Is that yet another promise broken, like the right hon. Lady's promise 10 years ago that prescription charges would not be increased?

Mrs. Shephard: Those on income support will be expected to pay 20 per cent. towards the cost of their community charge, for which an allowance is made within income support rates. Any increases during this year will be taken into account during next year's exercise.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that an important sector of the benefit population—those living on benefit—is single parents, primarily single mothers, where the father has abdicated any responsibility for the family? Will she ensure that the Government bring forward proposals as soon as possible to make sure that fathers do not get away with it, and that if necessary there will be an attachment of earnings or a deduction from benefit?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend will be aware that there have been increases in premiums in housing benefit and in community charge benefit for lone parents, and that there is to be a much more generous disregard for housing benefit with effect from October. He is right in saying, however, that much closer attention needs to be given to the amount of maintenance that is paid by fathers for the upkeep of their children. That is precisely what the Government's study and review are intended to achieve.

Incomes

14. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people live on incomes below the appropriate benefit level for their circumstances.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Estimates of eligible non-recipients of income-related benefits are contained in the technical notes on take-up, copies of which are available in the Library. These notes contain analyses for 1985, the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. McAvoy: Is not the Minister's answer that, in effect, the relevant figures indicative of the Government's attitude to poorer people have been phased out? As the Minister said, the latest figures available are those for 1985. Does she think that by abolishing the figures that reflect poverty, she is abolishing poverty?

Mrs. Shephard: No. In reply to earlier questions, I said that the series of income analyses, based on the households with below average income, are designed to provide an appropriate and accurate measure of people's differing living standards. They are the result of a technical review conducted by officials in the Department. They will focus on the incidence of incomes below the average, and we believe that they will give a more realistic picture.

Mr. Hind: Of those living just above benefit level, many are pensioners, a high proportion of whom are living on fixed incomes. All these people are hit hard by increases in standard charges, whether for heating, electricity or the community charge. Should not we keep material evidence on that group, to assess how those in it are coping? Will my hon. Friend look at that problem again?

Mrs. Shephard: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. One of the problems with a social security system is that one has to draw lines somewhere. As I have already said, those lines, and levels, will be reviewed as part of this year's exercise.

Family Incomes

15. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children live in families with income on, or within 40 per cent. above, the appropriate benefit level for their circumstances.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to question No. 11.

Mr. Pike: When will the Minister accept that the poorest section of the community suffers worst as a result of the freezing of child benefits, the forcing up of council house rents because of ring-fencing, and mortgage interest increases? Does she intend to increase the number of people at or just above poverty level? Is it not time that the Government gave more help to those most in need?

Mrs. Shephard: I remind the hon. Gentleman of the considerable improvements aimed at helping poorer families. Since April 1988, some 1·5 million families with 3 million children have had what I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree are quite substantial increases in their income-related benefits, amounting to £350 million in all. That includes increases in premiums, an extra £1 a week above inflation in the pocket of the mother, lower-paid working families getting family credit and additional help in housing benefit. The Government's social security system targets help.

Mr. Viggers: Is not the European Community definition of poverty, on which the Opposition make so much play, bogus, because it depends on a standard of benefit that is so ridiculous that it would mean that the more that we increased benefit, the more poor people there would be?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend. We have a network of proper income support, which is not to be found in the countries of our European Community partners.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister accept that the problem is not caused by technical deficiencies or deficiencies in methodology? Is she aware that every time she or any of her colleagues are challenged about the refusal of one benefit or another, they say that the appeals system will take care of that? However, the appeals system is clogged up because of the directions that she and other Ministers have given that payments should be reduced.

Mrs. Shephard: I accept that the work load of the appeals system fluctuates from time to time. I remind the hon. Gentleman that while some people are worse off than others, one thing is certain—no Government have ever accepted the proposition that one can draw a single poverty line with some on one side and some on the other. I remind him that the social security system, with its total budget of £55 billion a year, gives more extensive and better coverage than any other social security system that we have had.

Staff Relocation

18. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made in relocating his Department's staff away from the London area.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 14 November 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that a substantial amount of the Department's work in London was to be relocated to Leeds. A site for the new headquarters building in Leeds has been identified, and I expect that the relocation of posts from London will begin from the end of 1991.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I give cautious thanks for that reply, for two reasons. First, is not my hon. Friend concerned that the hon. Gentleman who leads for the Opposition on this topic, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), seems to be in total opposition to the move from London to the midlands and the north, which represents a much-needed improvement of the economy and employment? Secondly, I should have hoped that any reasonable person would consider that the city of Nottingham was a much better place to go than the city of Leeds.

Mrs. Shephard: Nottingham was included among the possible locations for the move of the Department of Social Security. Leeds was decided upon after the most careful consideration of its advantages, which are many. Indeed, it was the first choice among the staff who had an interest in relocating.

THE ARTS

Charitable Status

75. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has undertaken of the impact of charitable status upon arts bodies.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): Arts bodies that are charities derive considerable benefits from their charitable status. Under the new arrangements for the unified business rate, the minimum mandatory rate relief that local authorities must give to charities is to go up from 50 to 80 per cent. Local authorities continue to have discretion to give up to 100 per cent. relief to charities.

Mr. Wardle: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House roughly how many gainers there will be among arts bodies as a result of the change to charitable status? Have not various recent Government initiatives led to a substantial increase in corporate and private donations to the arts, and has not central Government and local government spending increased considerably as well?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. It is not possible to be precise about the number of net gainers among the charitable bodies in the arts. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that the four national companies—the royal opera house, English National Opera, the royal national theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company—are all net gainers. My hon. Friend is right that the amount of corporate sponsorship is still increasing. It is estimated to be at least £35 million a year in support of the arts.

National Film and Television School

76. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to expand the National Film and Television School.

Mr. Luce: I am increasing the grant to the National Film and Television School from £1·7 million in 1989-90 to £1·85 million in 1991-92 and will shortly be considering plans for its longer-term future.

Mr. Haynes: What a measly increase. When will the Minister do his job properly? Is he aware of the massive expansion of the school? Is he aware that there is a need for a European school? Is he aware of the expansion that there will be, and that the European School needs to be in the United Kingdom? If he funds the school properly, we shall get the European school here. The Minister should remember that we have had many successful actors—we have produced the finest in the world and we want to continue to do so. It is necessary for us, in the United Kingdom, to be involved with the European school.

Hon. Members: Encore.

Mr. Skinner: Will you refuse your Oscar, Frank?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) anticipated me. I am deeply disappointed that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has not yet received an Oscar for drama, but no doubt it will come in due course. I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in the film industry, so I am all the more surprised that he has not acknowledged that in the past 10 years there has been an increase in real terms of 83 per cent. in Government resources and overall resources for the National Film and Television School. If he had acknowledged that, I might have been able to take his question a little more seriously.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, according to Radio Nottingham, the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has been offered a part in a film by none other than David Puttnam? Can he confirm that, following the hon. Gentleman's departure from the House after the next general election—which all Conservative

Members regret—the National Film and Television School will be able to provide a place for the hon. Gentleman if he applies?

Mr. Luce: That is one of the best recommendations that I have heard, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Arts (Southwark)

77. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the amount of Government money which went to arts organisations or activities in Southwark in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Luce: In the current year, Greater London Arts has given £477,000 to 60 different activities and organisations in the borough of Southwark. The imperial war museum received £10·4 million, and the local museums and galleries in London receive financial support and advice via the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for the Minister's answer. Is he aware, however, of the double danger that faces boroughs such as Southwark in the coming financial year? Much of the money provided for the arts on the abolition of the GLC expires this year and will not be renewed. If the Secretary of State for the Environment were to poll-tax-cap Southwark, there would probably be no funding for the arts at all, either in Southwark or docklandswide. Will the Minister talk to his right hon. Friend, and make sure that the implications of poll tax and poll-tax-capping are clear? Discretionary funding will probably disappear altogether if any such idea crosses the desks in Marsham street.

Mr. Luce: It is entirely up to the borough of Southwark to decide what sums it can and should provide for artistic activities on behalf of its ratepayers. I note with interest that, over the past year, Scottish local authorities—despite the introduction of the community charge in Scotland a year ago—have been keeping up their support for the arts: vast sums are not required to provide them with good support and to enable them to flourish.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the great work done by arts institutions in Southwark such as the Southwark Heritage Association, the Shakespeare Globe trust and the Dulwich picture gallery, and of the enterprising way in which they have attracted not only public support but business sponsorship. Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment at Southwark council's reluctance to support those artistic institutions financially, morally or in some other way?

Mr. Luce: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's view. The Dulwich picture gallery, for example, is an outstanding centre of excellence. It makes a strong bid for private sector support and, indeed, I am going there to support its appeal for extra funds. Certainly such bodies deserve support, as does any centre of excellence.

National Companies

78. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will discuss with the Arts Council steps to reduce the deficits of the national companies.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to decide the level at which the national companies are funded. In 1990-91 they will each receive a grant increase of 11 per cent.

Mr. Banks: What other European country would treat its national companies as the Government treat ours? The Minister knows that the companies have been examined independently, and that the way in which they spend their grant has been found to be most efficient. Will he consider providing additional funds? Could his Ministry for instance, fund the national centres directly rather than through the Arts Council—or will all this be stopped by the Queen of the Goths over at No. 10?

Mr. Luce: Clearly the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my answer. I have already told him that next year will see one of the biggest cash increases ever provided: the total increase for the four main national companies will be just under £4 million.

I also find it odd that the hon. Gentleman should suggest that copying other countries is necessarily the right answer. The key question that we must ask ourselves is, "What is the quality of these national institutions?" We must ask ourselves whether they are of the highest quality —and the answer is yes. We have every reason to be proud of them.

Mr. Jessel: The national companies are indeed of tremendously high quality. In view of the 11 per cent. increase that my right hon. Friend has announced, however, does not he think that they should try a little harder to live within their means?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. Every institution in the artistic world must live within its means and manage its resources carefully, given the total amount of money that it has. However, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said earlier, the Arts Council is to receive a substantial increase next year—£20 million extra in cash resources—and 22 per cent. extra, in cash terms, during the next three years, together with three-year funding. That must be a sound basis on which to plan its finances.

Mr. Fisher: Does not the Minister realise that, even after taking into account last year's increase, the funding of all those companies will be below the rate of inflation over the past five years? That is why the accumulated deficit of the national companies comes to over £7 million. The figures that the Minister announced today will not begin to tackle that problem. The deficits will not go away. The Minister cannot run away and hide from them. If he does not pay off the deficits, it will not be just the Royal Shakespeare Company in London that will close; other companies and other theatres will close. Ten years of Tory mismanagement will leave the arts bankrupt—literally.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. He is again asking me directly to intervene and to undermine the arm's length policy. If a Socialist Government were ever elected, they would undermine the arm's length policy that has operated since the end of the second world war under successive Governments. The hon. Gentleman seems to ignore the plain fact that the Arts Council is to receive a £20 million cash increase in the coming year. It is for the Arts Council to decide how to distribute that sum—not the Ministry, not my officials, not me. That is the right principle on which to operate.

Opera and Ballet

79. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has held with the chairman of the Arts Council regarding the funding of national opera and ballet companies.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest, including the funding of arts bodies.

Mr. Bowis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who fought long and hard on behalf of English National Opera and its sister ballet company for an increase in funding and then for saving the Westminster funding element are grateful to him for managing to solve those twin problems? However, can he reassure me that that problem will not arise year after year and that he will ensure that there is adequate funding, particularly to cover the Westminster funding element, in the years to come?

Mr. Luce: Like my hon. Friend, I am glad that the Arts Council has decided largely to replace the funding that has been withdrawn by Westminster city council. As I explained in the House during a recent Adjournment debate, the method of funding by the London boroughs arises from the London rate equalisation scheme, which allows the subsidy to be shared among all the boroughs and to be paid by Westminster city council. In recent years, Westminster city council's domestic ratepayers have not been paying a subsidy to support the two institutions that my hon. Friend mentioned. There will now be substantial increases for English National Ballet and English National Opera.

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff Numbers

96. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister for Civil Service what is the latest figure he has for the total number of Civil Service staff in post; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary informed the House in December 1989, the total number of Civil Service staff in post is about 565,000. That represents a reduction of over one fifth on the figure for 1979 of about 732,000.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend expect further reductions to be made in coming years? Is he satisfied that in the senior grades one to four of the home Civil Service non-industrial grades only about 5 per cent. of the posts are held by women? If he is not satisfied, how could he achieve greater equilibrium?

Mr. Luce: On my hon. Friend's latter point, only 6 per cent. of the posts in senior grades one to three are held by women. That is a very disappointing figure. It is largely for that reason that we have put in hand an action programme to promote equality of opportunity for women. It is not possible to predict the size of the Civil Service in future years, but it is to the great credit of the Civil Service that one of the reasons for the decrease in its size during the past 10 years has been its programme for getting better value for money. That has led to a decrease in the number of civil servants employed, totalling 110,000.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister explain how it can be a credit when the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the accounts of the national insurance fund, published last week, had to qualify that? The report stated that there was a serious lack of skilled resources to tackle deliberate evasion by some employers, with the resulting huge under-collection of national insurance contributions. Will the Minister explain why it takes 30 days for the passport office to process passports and why the civil servants working in the Department of Social Security at Tottenham were on strike a few weeks ago because of understaffing? Will the Minister pay more attention to providing quality standards for the public and stop boasting about the number of civil servants he can cut?

Mr. Luce: Of course, the quality of public services provided by the Civil Service and the Government is a matter of great concern. That is one reason why agencies are being established around the country. One of their main purposes is to introduce performance targets and to improve the quality of service. We already have an outstandingly good Civil Service and we are trying to help it become even better.

Civil Service Training College

97. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last visited the Civil Service training college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I last visited the Civil Service college three weeks ago.

Mr. Ashby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of our Commissioners in Brussels has expressed the view that he is better served by higher quality civil servants, than the other Commissioners in Brussels? Is not that a reflection of the high quality of our civil servants and particularly their training?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is quite clear from the evidence of a number of other countries in Europe and elsewhere that are interested in what is happening in the British Civil Service and the introduction of the latest reforms, that there is great admiration for the standard of our Civil Service. The Civil Service college at Sunningdale, which concentrates on senior management, is doing an outstanding job and we should be very proud of it.

Mr. Alan Williams: Surely, pride in the quality of training in no way offsets the worries that the Minister should have about the increasing resignation rate among the high flyers, the fast stream in the Civil Service, as there are increasing differentials between their pay and that of their counterparts outside. What does the Minister have to say about that increasing trend and what does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Luce: Although recruitment is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, unless the right hon. Gentleman is focusing on one area, there is not a massive loss of high quality civil servants. There is bound to be some interchange, and that is not unhealthy for the Civil Service. We also have secondments,

but certainly we have a much more flexible pay policy, which is designed to deal more effectively with recruitment and retention.

Agencies

98. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on progress on implementing the agency programme.

99. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many areas of activity have now been granted executive agency status; and how many new agencies he expects to be created over the next 12 months.

Mr. Luce: Progress is very good. Eleven executive agencies have so far been established and I expect many more shortly. The first agencies are achieving tangible improvements in the efficiency and quality of Government services.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the progress that has been made. Will he confirm, despite the disgraceful and partisan scare campaign, that those who work in the agencies enjoy Civil Service conditions of work and Civil Service pensions?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right on the latter point. When an agency is established, that does not mean that the civil servants automatically lose their status. On the contrary: they remain a salient part of the Civil Service, and unless, after consultation, their conditions are adjusted, those also remain the same. There is now a great speeding up in the introduction of agencies. There will be a major introduction with the employment service becoming an agency next month, and I expect that by the summer a large proportion of the Civil Service will be moving in that direction.

Mr. Barry Field: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, with the 11 agencies already established, when the 43 agency candidates identified become agencies, more than one third of the Civil Service will have done so? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that gives a better sense of identity to the employers in those agencies and will answer the Comptroller and Auditor General's report when the collection of employers' contributions comes under an agency?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. All the candidates —which now amount to 44, including the DSS contributions and benefits agencies—amount to one third of the Civil Service. We are now making steady progress and with the introduction of a large number of agencies this spring and summer, the Civil Service will begin to transform in a major way.

Mr. Loyden: Has the Minister any plans to reduce the number of civil servants who administer the benefits system as a prelude to its privatisation, which I understand may lead to an American firm operating it?

Mr. Luce: That subject is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. A decision has been taken to create two large agencies to administer the benefits and contributions functions of the Department of Social Security. Under our agencies policy, we first decide whether services are fit to be privatised. If the Minister decides that they are not suitable, the next option is to decide whether they should be established as agencies. As agencies, they remain within the Government system and their staff remain civil servants.

Trade Unions

102. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has any plans to meet Civil Service trade union representatives, and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Luce: I meet the Civil Service unions from time to time to discuss a range of matters.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister have a look at the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, which states that about £350 million for the Inland Revenue has not been collected from employers, who have taken that money off employees? Will he ensure that proper inspectors are appointed so that those arrears are collected? Will he bear it in mind that people who claim unemployment and other benefits are being told by the Department of Social Security, "You cannot claim benefit because your employer has not handed over the proper contributions"? If he looks into that and stops hounding one-parent families, he will be doing his job properly.

Mr. Luce: That is a question for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the creation of those agencies will make the Civil Service ensure that it obtains good value for money. The service already achieves that, but the creation of the agencies will move us further in that direction and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support that objective.

Racial Discrimination

103. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to eliminate racial discrimination in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: The Government are an equal opportunity employer. They have a range of policies to prevent racial discrimination and are drawing up a formal programme for action to increase equality of opportunity for people of ethnic minority origin, which I plan to launch in May.

Mr. Wardle: Is not it essential that the Civil Service leads the way in this country, in ensuring that racial discrimination does not affect the progress of anyone at work?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Under the policy of equality of opportunity, it is right to have a positive action programme for such subjects. About 4·2 per cent. of ethnic minorities are represented in the Civil Service, which roughly reflects the working population. They are not represented at senior level, but we must ensure true equality of opportunity.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, dear. I shall take the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) first.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to the current edition of *The House Magazine?*

Mr. Speaker: But I do not have responsibility for that.

Mr. Holt: I know that, Sir, but you do have responsibility for your instruction on taxis at the Members' entrance. Consequently, I should like to draw your attention to an article written by Simon Heffer, in which he threatens Members of Parliament. He says that journalists are keeping a "list of offenders" of Members of Parliament who exercise their right to take precedence at the taxi rank.

Mr. Speaker: It does not seem to be a matter of great parliamentary moment.

Mr. Holt: I am sorry that you, Mr. Speaker, do not see this as important, but then you do not have to queue up for a taxi. The article says that at least one of the journalists "is keeping a list of offenders, some of them occasionally look to the press to report uncritically their views on certain important matters. Should they be concerned about the future quality of that reporting, a little less urgency" will be required.

There is an order at the Members' entrance in your name, Mr. Speaker, stating that Members will take precedence. In the light of the threat in that article, will you kindly look into this and let us have your views?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is such a notice. I hardly think that the hon. Member needs my protection in a matter of this kind.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker—that one.

Mr. Speaker: All right.

Mr. Skinner: I think that you could have responded to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who referred to not being able to get a taxi, by saying that, if he hangs around a little longer, he will find that some ministerial cars are empty. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman makes inquiries of the Secretary of State for Wales and asks the Prime Minister how many more Cabinet Ministers whispered in her ear last September, "Give it a few months—I shall be leaving."

Mr. Speaker: There are many things that I might have said to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). The House knows that the Services Committee has reported on this matter and that precedence is indeed given to Members who require a taxi.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It cannot really be further to the point of order.

Mr. Haynes: Well it is, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Is it really? Very well.

Mr. Haynes: I do not know whether you are aware of the all-party cycling group. I suggest that you tell the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) to join it, and get some of that weight off.

Mr. Speaker: Good idea.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): May I raise a serious and genuine point of order with you, Mr. Speaker? I know that that sounds unusual. On the proper day laid down for questions to the Department of Trade and Industry, I tabled a question to ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to give the trends in manufacturing industry productivity over the past 12——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Was the question transferred, or disallowed?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It was transferred. None of my questions would be disallowed—all my colleagues know that. I came to the House today in my usual innocent manner and found that my question had been transferred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I did not mention interest rates, where the Exchequer always likes to get its hand——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Surely I can finish my question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member must have heard dozens of times——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member has, because he is in the Chamber regularly. This matter has been put to me dozens of times. I have no responsibility for the transfer of questions; that is entirely a matter for the Goverment.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: May I continue once more, Sir? I hate to bore you, but surely you, as Mr. Speaker, are in charge of allowing Members to ask questions of Secretaries of State without them, as in some kind of Russian roulette, changing them so that no one has to answer. If a Secretary of State does not want to answer a question, he can transfer it to someone else, which means that the Member concerned will not have a chance to ask that question for another month. We must have some protection against this transfer system.

Mr. Speaker: It has ever been thus. Ministers who believe that they have no responsibility——

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is getting desperate. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak will listen to me, not to Members across the Gangway.

It has always been a fact that Ministers transfer questions if they are not within the responsibility of their

Department. I feel sorry for the hon. Member, because this occasionally happened to me, but he must take up his complaint with the Department concerned.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. No doubt it has been reported to you that there was a bit of bother in the Chamber on Friday, because we did not reach the Radiation Exposed Crown Employees (Benefits) Bill, which would have given pensions to veterans who had taken part in nuclear tests. During the filibuster on the Planning Permission (Demolition of Houses) Bill, the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) failed early in his speech to declare his interests. It was only after the intervention of about five Opposition Members that the hon. Member said:

"I shall eventually come on to the part of my speech in which I declare that interest."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1990; Vol. 168, c. 551]

I then quoted, at column 552, "Erskine May":

"A Member will normally declare his interest at the beginning of his remarks."

Later——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is quite right: I was not present on Friday. However, I always look at *Hansard*. I see, in column 551, that this very matter was dealt with by Mr. Deputy Speaker. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to that; there is nothing more to be done about it now.

Mr. Boyes: If an hon. Member, on either side of the House, has an interest to declare, the person in the Chair must at some time determine whether or not that Member has spoken for long enough to have declared his interest. On the basis of Friday's interpretation, a Member could make a one-hour speech and declare an interest only in the 59th minute. Before his declaration, a number of points affecting the whole debate might have been made. "Normally" has to have some specific meaning.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot go back on this matter. However, later this week there will be a debate on the whole matter of Members' interests. The whole House knows the rule: that if an hon. Member on either side of the House——

Mr. Skinner: That debate is about John Browne's body.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that, if a Member has a personal interest to declare, he should always declare it.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker, not a bogus one. It is very relevant, and I am sure that you will be able to give a decision on it. Last Thursday—St. David's day—we debated Welsh affairs for six hours. During that time, the Secretary of State for Wales had an opportunity to announce his impending retirement. Have you, Mr. Speaker, received from the Government any notification concerning a statement regarding——

Mr. Speaker: No. I am afraid that points of order do not come much more bogus than that.

Orders of the Day

Aviation and Maritime Security Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

COMPENSATION IN RESPECT OF CERTAIN MEASURES TAKEN UNDER PART III

"—(1) The provisions of this section have effect where, in compliance with a direction under section 24 of this Act or in compliance with an enforcement notice, the person to whom the direction was given or on whom the notice was served takes any measures consisting of the construction, execution, alteration, demolition or removal of a building or other works on land either within or outside a harbour area.

(2) If the value of any interest in that land to which a person is entitled is depreciated in consequence of the taking of those measures, or the person having such an interest suffers loss in consequence of them by being disturbed in his enjoyment of any of that land, he is entitled to compensation equal to the amount of the depreciation or loss.

(3) If any land other than the land on which the measures are taken is injuriously affected by the taking of those measures, any person having an interest in that other land who suffers loss in consequence of its being injuriously affected is entitled to compensation equal to the amount of the loss.

(4) Any compensation to which a person is entitled under this section shall be payable to him by the person by whom the measures in question were taken.

(5) The provisions of Schedule *(Provisions relating to compensation)* to this Act have effect for the purposes of this section; and subsections (1) to (4) above have effect subject to the provisions of that Schedule."—*[Mr. Portillo]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.42 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, we are to discuss Government amendment No. 10.

Mr. Portillo: This Bill is a serious measure dealing with serious matters. I think that every member, from which ever side of the House, of the Standing Committee would agree that it was considered very seriously in Committee and that Government, Official Opposition and SLD Members made their best contributions to try to improve its wording. For that, I pay tribute to all concerned.

New clause 1 is accompanied by Government amendment No. 10, which relates to the schedule that would go with the new clause. The schedule relates to compensation procedures for third parties whose land interests are affected by security measures. This matter was raised in Committee, and the Government indicated that they would introduce appropriate legislation. Both the clause and the schedule parallel existing provisions available under aviation security provisions.

Although, when the Bill was drafted, it was not envisaged that such compensation facilities would ever be needed—indeed, experience of the aviation provisions supports that view—it seems right to have a system available to ensure that no third party would ever be unduly penalised by security works. The compensation will be paid by the person who carried out the work required by a direction. It would be for him to decide how

[Mr. Portillo]

to finance the cost of the compensation, although, in all likelihood, it would be treated in the same way as any other security provision cost.

Despite the probably infrequent use of this clause, I commend its addition to the Bill as a necessary safeguard for, and help to, those people indirectly affected by the Bill's proposals.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) in particular was worried about how disagreements on levels of compensation might be settled. The proposed schedule in amendment No. 10 is modelled on a schedule that is already available in the Aviation Security Act 1982, which provides that the values will be calculated in accordance with rules laid down in the Land Compensation Act 1961.

In the event of any disagreement, the matter can be referred to the Lands Tribunal for settlement.

I think that the hon. Gentleman was also concerned about how the costs might be applied to certain people who were affected. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to clause 28(2), which allows that any person given a direction requiring works that affect a third party can object to it because the measures are excessively onerous. The onerousness could come from the level of compensation being sought. The minimum objection period of 30 days could be lengthened by the Secretary of State while the issue is resolved—probably by reference to the Lands Tribunal.

I hope that the new clause, which we discussed in outline in Committee, and the accompanying schedule commend themselves to the House.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I thank the Minister for the way in which he has introduced the new clause, which, as he made clear, deals with points that we raised in Committee.

I seek clarification of one or two aspects of the new clause. The Minister for Aviation and Shipping led us to expect that, under the new clause, the harbour board would be responsible for all compensation but it now appears that the party who is subject to the notice will be liable for his own compensation. That is obviously progress, although the Opposition remain concerned about a number of matters.

We have a now elaborate system of direction and enforcement notices, set out in legislation and backed by severe penalties but, as I understand it, where no compulsory powers are attached to the operation of the directions, any third party can stifle the operation and intention of a direction or enforcement notice served by the Secretary of State. That is a cause for concern not in respect of the more mundane changes that may be required in security arrangements—day-to-day changes, which are subject to negotiation—but in respect of urgent circumstances. Perhaps the Minister will explain exactly what will happen in such urgent cases.

I also seek clarification of the effect of the notices and directions. I am sure that the Minister is familiar with the circumstances in planning law under which property can become blighted. Is it possible that property will become blighted as a result of the service of directions, and what are the implications of that?

On the broader issues, we accept and welcome the new clause, because it takes account of the serious points made in Committee.

Mr. Portillo: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps Ministers' explanations in Committee were not as clear as they might have been. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) has correctly understood that the directions can apply to any party, and that it is the party to whom the directions apply who will be responsible for awarding compensation to third parties who are affected; it could be a harbourmaster, it could be a shipping line or it could be another party.

I hope to go a long way to answering a number of the hon. Gentleman's questions by explaining that it seems likely that in many cases the works that need to be carried out will be works in the harbour area. In circumstances in which the works fall within the harbour area, the Bill settles the matter clearly because the directions within the harbour area overrule any other Act or rule of law—that is made clear in clause 34—and will apply irrespective of anything that might be in contract. If the works are in the harbour, it is clear that the direction takes precedence. The party to whom the direction has been addressed is responsible for ensuring that the works are carried out and can compensate a third party. In other words, the third party may well be within the harbour area.

For example, a harbour authority may be given a direction which required it to construct a wall. That wall may impinge upon a third party—for example, a shipping line which has property within the harbour area. The direction within the harbour area would take precedence over any other Act or rule of law or contract, but the harbourmaster would arrange compensation with the third party in that case.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend will be aware that we have discussed the concerns of the British Ports Federation on this point and the requirement on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under the Bill to order harbour authorities to demolish or alter buildings. Can my hon. Friend tell me whether the new clause has the agreement of the British Ports Federation and also meets the precise point with which the federation has been in consultation with the Department of Transport?

Mr. Portillo: I have no further information about what discussions may have continued about that since we last spoke about it. Perhaps I will receive more news during the course of the debate and I will come back to my hon. Friend about that if I do.

Mr. Field: So far as I can understand the new clause, it appears to meet the precise point that the British Ports Federation asked me to make in Committee.

Mr. Portillo: I realise that my hon. Friend made his intervention in a helpful spirit, and I hope to give him some confirmation about that.

In response to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, I believe that it is rather unlikely that a third party outside the harbour area would be affected. If we were considering the construction of a wall along the boundary of the harbour and the adjoining area, the rules governing party walls, which I understand are general rules to be found in planning law, would apply.

If we were considering a matter that took the harbour authority considerably outside its own terrain, the hon.

Member for Aberdeen, South would be right to say that there was nothing in the new clause to force the third party to grant that the necessary works be carried out. On the other hand, in such an unlikely event, there is a method in the new clause to settle the compensation.

To show how unlikely that event is, I should say that, during the time that the equivalent provisions have been in operation for aviation security, there have been no cases in which such compensation has had to be paid. Whereas most cases are likely to be within the harbour area, it is likely that the parties would agree among themselves on compensation. If a direction was given to the harbour authority and perhaps a corresponding direction to a shipping company and each must carry out works, I imagine that they would probably agree between themselves on appropriate compensation, although there is a fallback, in that it can be referred to the Lands Tribunal.

Mr. Doran: What about blight?

Mr. Portillo: It seems most unlikely that blight will arise. The probability is that the works would be within the harbour area. I cannot see blight occuring within a harbour area, and that would not be blight in any commonly accepted way. I find it hard to imagine, except perhaps through the building of a wall along a boundary, what works would go far outside the harbour area. That is why the question of blighting does not arise. If, on reflection the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South believes that there is a point to pursue on that, perhaps he can take it up with me in correspondence.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 2

RESPONSIBILITY OF OWNERS, CHARTERERS AND MANAGERS

'.—(1) Any direction under section 21 or 24 of this Act shall be given first to the owner, charterer or manager of a ship in respect of which such a direction may be given.

(2) The Secretary of State may give a direction under section 21 or 24 of this Act to the master of a ship only after the Secretary of State's best endeavours have failed to secure compliance by the owner, charterer or manager with a similar direction in respect of that ship.'.—*[Ms. Ruddock.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendments Nos. 1 to 3.

Amendment No. 11, in clause 29, page 32, line 7, after 'Act)', insert,

'provided that the best endeavours of the Secretary of State have failed to secure compliance by the owner, charterer or manager of a ship with the direction to which such an enforcement notice relates,'.

Government amendments Nos. 4 to 7 and Government amendment No. 15.

Ms. Ruddock: The new clause follows on from the debate in Committee, in which we sought unsuccessfully to remove "master" from clause 17 and to insert "master" in subsequent clauses. Our purpose, then as now, was to recognise the reality of the world in which shipmasters operate.

In the Bill as originally drafted, the Government had implicitly recognised the difference between masters and the other three categories of persons, namely, the owners, charterers and managers, to whom directions might be given or from whom information might be sought. A distinction was made between foreign and British-owned ships. It was clear to us, and the Minister admitted in Committee, that the master of a foreign ship was being drawn into the provisions of the Bill simply because he was thought to be more accessible than the owners, charterers or managers. Opposition Members argued then and we still maintain that the onerous responsibilities and penalties that are imposed by the Bill should fall on those who have the resources and authority to comply.

Our new clause is an attempt to recognise those realities while accepting the Minister's intransigence. In new clause 2, we propose that when a direction is given, it is

"given first to the owners, charterer or manager".

In a consequential amendment, No. 11, we provide for an enforcement notice to be served on a master only when

"the best endeavours of the Secretary of State have failed to secure compliance by the owner, charterer or manager"

The National Union of Maritime, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers complained bitterly that misconceptions about the power and authority of a shipmaster abound and that the law is being framed as though a master has complete control of his ship and can call on unlimited financial, technical and human resources. The union feels strongly that the Bill would place responsibilities on masters that legislators would not dream of placing on captains of aircraft.

A recent article on masters by Michael Gray in *Lloyd's List* states:

"Rich in responsibility but poverty stricken in authority would seem to sum up the wretched modern master and his miserable life afloat. . . . in port after port come the legions of those earnestly requesting the master's signature to sign his life away, to commit himself to all manner of circumstances over which he cannot possibly have any control whatsoever. He is required to take responsibility for matters well beyond his actual minimal authority. And no matter how energetically he notes protest, how carefully he seeks to absolve himself from the consequences of his actions, it is his signature that is on the document, it is he who is ultimately liable."

According to the article, at a recent conference, Captain Colin Evans, the secretary general of the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations, said that he believed that

"the burden on shipmasters had increased beyond the bounds of reason.

He saw a combination of factors conspiring against the master's peace of mind—tight manning, the multi-cultural crew, ever increasing pressure to sail, to stand on, to arrive in time. The master, said Captain Evans, was just not given the resources or the authority to enable him to do his job properly."

It is in recognition of the facts as presented to us by NUMAST that we move new clause 2. Without that clause, Government amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 3 cannot be justified.

Briefly, the amendments would ensure that the same duties are imposed on masters of British ships as are imposed on masters of foreign ships. That is a retrograde step, because the real responsibility, whether they are British ships or foreign ships, lies with the owners, charterers and managers. We seek to place responsibilities on masters of British ships. It was previously acknowledged that the inclusion of "masters of foreign ships" was

[Ms. Ruddock]

an expedient because it was most likely that masters could be contacted more easily than those who are actually responsible.

Surely it must be acknowledged that a master, in seeking to comply with a demand for information or with the onerous directions for search and so on, must consult his employers. He will undoubtedly need to do that, because they undoubtedly have the authority and resources. We believe that that is where responsibilities should properly be placed. Therefore, I have moved new clause 2 to give effect to those feelings.

4 pm

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): We cannot accept the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock). For certain directions we have introduced an ability to give a direction to a master. There was considerable disquiet on this point among Opposition Members, but after considering their points, we feel that they are wholly unjustified. We shall extend the possibility of giving directions to masters only to matters on which they are competent and responsible to act. As they cannot be given directions under clause 24—the main direction-making power which can require measures to be taken—no liability is placed on them to take decisions which involve capital expenditure. That, of course, is the responsibility of the ship operator.

Masters will be likely to receive only directions which require information or prohibit them from allowing people or property to be brought near or on a ship, from allowing the ship to go to sea unless searches are carried out and from allowing a ship to go to sea unless certain modifications are carried out. All those matters are within the master's scope of responsibility.

Ms. Ruddock: The measures which the Minister suggests that a master might have to take are serious measures when it comes to commercial interests. It is our view that the master could not, or would not be willing to, undertake such measures unless he could consult the owners, operators or charterers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The issues may be serious but so would the reasons why the directions were issued. We are not in the game of issuing directions for the sake of it. We are not taking the power to issue unnecessary directions or directions for minor reasons. Directions would be issued for serious reasons. They would be issued only where necessary and where, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, it was not possible to implement the same action against the ship operator.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Why does the Minister have such objection to this modest new clause? All it says is that the Secretary of State "may" give directions. Would it not be right for the Secretary of State to take a reserve power to cover all eventualities? No one expects the Minister to give directions to a master for minor reasons. Surely, in the interests of security and safety, the widest powers should be available in case they are needed.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is exactly what we seek to do throughout the Bill. We seek to provide the widest powers possible, so that, in the eventuality, we have the right measures to require various operators to take the action that we require. If we have trouble finding the operators—I shall come to this when I deal with the Government amendments—we want to be able to serve notices on the master of the ship, because sometimes it may not be possible to trace the owners or operators as quickly as we should like.

I understand that it is convenient to speak now to Government amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 15. Following the debate in Standing Committee, the Government undertook to take steps to remove the discrimination in the application of legislation to British and foreign ships. First, clause 21, which contains a power to impose restrictions on ships, can now be applied against both British and foreign ships when they are in harbour areas.

I stress that those powers of direction will not be the main way in which improvements in security will be implemented. Most directions to create a positive improvement will be given under clause 24—that is, the general powers to direct measures to be taken. The powers provided in clause 21 are for use only in certain circumstances.

I hope that my next point goes some way to answer the hon. Lady's point about amendment No. 11. We have introduced an ability to give a direction to a master. Again, the considerable disquiet about this point is not justified, because we shall extend the possibility of giving directions to masters only on those matters on which they are competent and responsible to act.

Mr. Doran: Does the Minister accept that our apprehensions relate not to his intentions, but to the way in which the law will operate in practice? As was made clear in Committee—and accepted by the Minister then—in every case the first line of contact will be the master, and no attempt will be made to contact the owner, charterer or manager, because whoever is responsible for enforcing the direction will go to the most obvious point, the master. We have tabled our amendments for that simple reason.

Mr. McLoughlin: I appreciate the way in which the hon. Gentleman has made that point. I can only assure him time and time again that only if there are problems with contacting or communicating directly with the operator will we use the powers to contact the master. It would be wrong of us not to have those powers. That is why we have tabled our amendments and why we feel that the master needs to be included in the "final line".

If we have trouble in contacting the operator, we need to be able to contact the master. I emphasise that security reasons may be involved and that we would not do that lightly. We do not want to take that action at every stage, but if it is difficult to contact a foreign operator for whatever reason—there may be many reasons—we should be able to tell the master of the vessel that certain actions are required of him. We need the power in statute to do that. That is important.

The concern was raised in Committee, and in various other discussions with me, that we were somehow discriminating against British ship operators in favour of foreign ship operators. We had to do everything we could

to explain that that was not the case and that we were taking the action so that ships of whatever nationality would be obliged to abide by what we are asking.

Ms. Ruddock: Even if Government amendment No. 1 is made, the clause still provides a seven-day period during which the information has to be given up. How often does the Minister think that the master of either a British or a foreign-owned ship will be in harbour for as long as seven days? Does not that period give the Minister ample time to contact the real owners, charterers or managers?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Lady raises an important issue. It is certainly true that modern ships and shipping operations are in harbour for only a brief period. That is why we need the power, if necessary, to place that responsibility and request on the master if we are having trouble in getting hold of the operator. That is an important point.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but then I should like to make some progress.

Mr. Hughes: I apologise for not having scrutinised the Bill in detail, because the answer to my question may be there. Has the Minister taken the power to prevent ships from sailing if there is difficulty in contacting the owners or in getting the master to carry out the directions?

Mr. McLoughlin: Yes: if the direction is not carried out, we have the power to prevent the ship from leaving the harbour until the direction is complied with. We have that power, and it is wholly right that we do. I do not believe that there is any difference between us on that point—there was certainly no diference on it in Committee.

If an elimination process were written into the Bill, it would inevitably cause delay, during which the ship could disappear because no prosecution or enforcement action could be effected unless it could be proved that adequate steps had been taken to reach the operator before tackling the master. A month may be necessary to convince the courts that adequate time had been given and reasonable steps taken for notifying foreign-based operators. To avoid this procedural trap and yet acknowledge and mitigate the concerns of the Opposition, it would probably be best to offer an assurance that, wherever practicable, action will always be taken against the operator first. We give that overwhelming assurance. It must be acknowledged, however, that the powers are needed at the end of the day.

No liability would be placed on the master of a ship to take decisions which involved capital expenditure. Such decisions are the responsibility of ship operators. Masters will be likely only to receive directions which require information or prohibit them from allowing people or property to be brought near or on their ship, or for the ship to go to sea unless searches are carried out or certain modifications are implemented. All these requirements come within the scope of a master's responsibility. The powers will be used only where necessary and where, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, it is not possible to impose the same requirements on a ship's operator. The provisions are far more likely to be used when dealing with the masters of foreign ships, as it is those ships that will present the most problems when it comes to locating the operators and achieving the desired results.

We are not legislating to ensure that only foreign ships implement the measures that we feel are required. Several foreign shipping lines have voluntarily introduced high levels of security standards. We want to be able to take the powers which we consider necessary. We shall always attempt, first and foremost, to contact the ship's operator and require him to give us information. When that is not possible, we feel that it is necessary to be able to serve a request upon the master of the ship. A master has considerable responsibility for the overall conduct and safe transit of his vessel.

Amendments Nos. 5 and 6 are essentially editorial. They represent an attempt to be more specific about the way in which administrative matters connected with the detention of a ship are implemented. Amendment No. 5 makes it clear that it is for an authorised person to certify that a direction has not been complied with. Amendment No. 6 places a requirement on an authorised person to deliver the certificate to the officer to detain the ship, if he does not use his powers to detain the ship himself. In both instances, a master must receive a copy of the certificate when his ship is detained, so that he knows the reasons for the detention.

I hope that the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) will agree that the Government have gone a long way to meet some of the issues which were raised in Committee.

In Committee, we undertook to remove discrimination in the application of legislation to British and foreign ships. Amendments Nos. 15 and 7 ensure that that will happen, in two ways. First, the prohibition powers that are contained in clause 21 will, if the amendments are agreed to, be applied against both British ships and foreign ships when they are in harbour areas. These powers of direction will not be the main way in which we shall implement improvements to security. Most directions relating to positive improvements will come under clause 24. The powers in clause 21 are for use only in certain circumstances.

I ask the House to reject new clause 2 and to agree to the Government's amendments.

Mr. Robert Hughes: My concern is about the way in which the Government approach their responsibilities and how vigorously they intend to apply the proposed legislation. When I have approached the marine inspectorate about the alterations made to ships in harbour, which have caused people to believe that they might be unstable, quick action has been taken by the Department to put things right and to prevent a modified vessel from going to sea—this applies especially to trawlers —where there is a fear that safety and life might be endangered. That is something to be applauded.

On the other hand, there have been instances when the Department and other arms of the law have not acted in the proper spirit of the law. I have in mind especially foreign ships where the crews have not been paid. Representatives of the National Union of Seamen have tried to prevent ships from sailing until the crews have been properly paid. However, the police are brought in, the representatives of the NUS are taken off the ship and arrested, the crew are simply placed on the quayside and the ship sails merrily off, having not met its international obligations and responsibility to members of the crew.

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

I seek from the Minister an assurance that he will act vigorously not only within the letter of the law as it will be when the Bill is passed, but within the spirit of it, so that there is no shilly-shallying. I hope that there will be nobody saying, "It's a bit difficult. It may be a marginal case so we will let things go." We have to be specific, rigorous and determined to apply the law. If the Minister gives that assurance, and subject to the advice of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, I will not vote against the Government's amendments.

4.15 pm

Mr. Barry Field: I hope that my hon. Friend can confirm that the amendments meet the concerns expressed by the General Council of British Shipping about foreign vessels and the ability of the Secretary of State to get to grips with them. If that is the case, as I believe it is, the deputy director-general of the council, Jim Buckley, has asked me to convey the council's gratitude to my hon. Friends for their acceptance of these amendments.

Mr. McLoughlin: I was surprised by what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, because it seemed to be more in accord with our views than those of his Front Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Robert Hughes *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McLoughlin: I see him denying that, and I do not want to embarrass him.

We are introducing a new kind of legislation, which is a mirror image of the security set up in the aviation industry as much as possible, although one cannot tie up the two word for word because of some differences. As a result of this legislation, we shall have on the statute book a set of directions that we can make and require companies to carry out. In such circumstances, I am conscious that it would be wholly wrong if foreign vessels were allowed to operate under a different set of rules from British operators and vessels. This legislation is designed solely to meet security directions, so it would not be a proper use of the legislation to extend it outside that power. That is an important point, but I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concerns about the wider implications for the shipping industry.

I can give my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) the assurance that these amendments meet the various points brought to our attention by the General Council of British Shipping. I have explained some of the reasons why we have accepted them, one of which is that it would be wrong to introduce regulations applying to British shipping but not to foreign vessels. That is why we have tabled the amendments. I hope that they find favour with the House.

Ms. Ruddock: We are most disappointed by the Government's response to new clause 2, because we tried to produce a compromise. In Committee, the Minister assured us, as he has been assuring us all afternoon, that there will definitely be an attempt to contact, first and foremost, those who are truly responsible—the owners, the charterers and the managers. We are delighted that he has made that clear, but because he has done so, we find it difficult to understand why, after we has so carefully introduced this compromise and tried to reach agreement with him, he has been unable to accept the new clause. However, as he has made his position clear and I do not expect to persuade him any further, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and new clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 3

DIRECTIONS IN RESPECT OF FIXED PLATFORMS

'For the purposes to which this Act applies, the Secretary of State may give a direction in writing to any person who operates, owns or manages a fixed platform, requiring him to take such measures as are specified in the direction.'.—*[Mr. Doran].*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Doran: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 13, in clause 10, in page 15, line 6, leave out

'or by threats of any kind'.

No. 14, in clause 11, in page 15, line 27, at end insert—

'(c) by its nature or design, is intended to raise the apprehension that it is intended to destroy or damage a ship or fixed platform, or endanger the safe navigation of a ship, or safety of a fixed platform.'.

Mr. Doran: New clause 3 relates to discussions that we had in Committee, when I set out in detail events when a hoax bomb was planted on a gas production platform in Morecambe bay.

One matter that caused me concern when I read the details of the event was trying to relate it to what the Government propose in the Bill, which creates more that 40 new offences—some of them serious and carrying the most serious penalties—and a mass of restrictions and regulations, and a bureaucratic system of direction and enforcement. However, nowhere in the Bill have the Government or industry been given the responsibility to do the simplest thing—to train and to prepare for the type of events that occurred on that platform.

New clause 3 requires the Secretary of State to give directions which would apply to owners and managers of fixed platforms to meet the gap in the legislation.

For the benefit of hon. Members who were not able to hear the Committee proceedings, I shall summarise the circumstances surrounding the events on the CCP gas production platform in Morecambe bay which was operated by a subsidiary of British Gas.

On 9 October 1989, at about 8.30 am, a suspected bomb was found on the platform. None of the men on the platform was notified until about one hour later, and then they were not given detailed reasons why they were expected to gather at the muster points and life stations. It was not until a quarter past ten in the morning that the men were told that a bomb had been found, and that caused some alarm. It transpired that a taped package, measuring 6 in by 7 in, with wires that appeared to be a timing device attached, had been found in a cellar close to one of the 26 in gas riser pipes coming on to the platform. A number of such high pressure pipelines come on to the platform and all the men knew that they were of the same sort that exploded on the Piper Alpha platform and caused that tragedy. Therefore, there was some concern among the work force.

The men were kept at the muster stations in the recreation area until 2.30 pm, when the installation's

operations manager decided to address them. He told them little more than they had been told in the morning, but he confirmed that the bomb had been found and that bomb disposal squads were not expected until 4 o'clock. Again, that caused some concern.

The men were aware that the package had been discovered at 8.30 am, and they were also well aware from all the hectic activity around them—the naval vessels and helicopters—that experts who would have been able to deal with a bomb were in the area because of the Conservative party conference which was taking place a few miles away in Blackpool. They could not understand why the experts could not reach the platform any sooner than 4 o'clock, despite the fact that the bomb had been found about eight hours previously.

The men were not told until 6 o'clock that the bomb disposal squad had decided to try to blow up the suspected bomb, and that also caused considerable concern. The men were aware that attempts had been made to depressurise the pipelines, but one had not been depressurised and the consequences of a bomb exploding in those circumstances would have been horrific.

Throughout the day, there had been some panic and pressure from the men to get off the platform, but none was allowed to leave. They were threatened that if they went off they would not be allowed back. Effectively, they were told that their jobs were on the line. I have told that story because it is a graphic example of a real emergency. I understand that legal proceedings are likely to follow.

As it took place on an offshore installation, the incident relates at least to part II of the Bill. According to the evidence that I have been given so far, the management dealt with it in a way that could not possibly be described as skilful; it could, indeed, have been calculated to cause the maximum distress. The men had no idea what to do. The arrival of the specialist bomb disposal experts was considerably delayed, and all their requests to be evacuated were refused. Although the package proved eventually to be a hoax, no one knew that until the disposal squad had dismantled it; meanwhile, unnecessary distress was caused. That could easily have been dealt with by management, who could have evacuated the platform.

In the Bill, the Government have created more than 40 new offences. They have also created a very bureaucratic system of direction and enforcement notices, yet the Secretary of State has not been given the simple power to require training and exercises to deal with such incidents. The problem is not hypothetical; oil and gas platforms are vulnerable, volatile and dangerous. In the event of a further hoax, or even the placing of a real explosive device on a platform, the men must not be subjected to such pressures again.

In Committee, the Minister said that he would contact the Department of Energy as a matter of urgency, and I shall be interested to learn whether the Department has any lessons to pass on. In the meantime, the new clause would allow the Secretary of State to enforce a requirement for training and exercises.

Amendment No. 13 would deal with a problem that was raised on Second Reading—threats against the work force. Industrial disputes have occurred on offshore installations, and I fear that there will be more this summer as a result of offshore unrest and dissatisfaction. Few people in the industry do not expect that to happen. On previous occasions, men working on North sea platforms have been subjected to intimidation of which an offshore management would not be capable.

I can give two examples. The first relates to industrial action taken on MSV Stadive earlier this year. The ship is used in the northern sector of the North sea, in the Shetland basin, as a special response vessel: it is expected to respond to emergencies, and its crew have already dealt with two highly publicised incidents. The first involved the Chinook helicopter disaster in 1986, when they were required to collect bodies; the second was the serious blow-out 18 months ago on the Ocean Odyssey drilling rig, in which a radio operator was killed.

The vessel's crew were required to remain with the vessel, which was positioned over the blow-out well for about three weeks until the emergency had been dealt with and the well capped. It was a dedicated crew. The men were employed by a company that acted as contractor for Shell UK Ltd. Recently, Shell UK Ltd. decided to dispose of that contractor and to employ a new one. Most of the men had worked for the contractor for nine years; some of them had been there for 15 years. All were told that they were to be made redundant. If they had been working onshore, they would have had certain rights; their employers would have been under an obligation to them.

As the men appeared to have no rights, the employers entered into a battle about who would be responsible for redundancy payments. The men were left high and dry in the middle. Industrial action followed. Every member of the crew was intimidated and threatened with the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970, which provided for a maximum fine of £2,000. That ended the industrial action. All the men were sorely intimidated.

4.30 pm

According to the drafting of the provisions, an employer faced with industrial action would be entitled to threaten his men with the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, which might lead to a £2,000 fine, and with the provisions of clauses 9 and 10, and to say that an offence had been committed. The maximum penalty in that case would be life imprisonment.

The Minister has told me that any prosecutions under this measure would require the sanction of the procurator fiscal or the Crown Office. That would carry little weight with a work force that was engaged in an industrial dispute that was perfectly legal onshore. The evidence shows that employers would use such threats and that the work force would be intimidated. For that reason, therefore, we have tabled amendment No. 13.

Amendment No. 14 is designed to deal with what was perceived in Committee to be a major gap in the legislation. I relate it to the incident in Morecambe bay. The Bill deals adequately with threats and offences. However, it does not deal with the hoax which, as the Morecambe bay incident showed, can be just as alarming as a real threat or incident. According to the amendment, any substance or package that raises

"the apprehension that it is intended to destroy or damage a ship or fixed platform, or endanger the safe navigation of a ship, or safety of a fixed platform"

would also constitute the kind of offence that appears to have occurred on the CCP platform on 9 October. In Committee, all sides appeared to accept that that was a serious gap in the legislation. I shall be pleased to hear the Minister's response.

Mr. Portillo: I remind the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) that part II is intended to allow the United Kingdom to ratify and implement the provisions of the convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against safety of maritime navigation, which is known as the Rome convention, and the linked protocol, which is known as the Rome protocol. The hon. Gentleman will remember that, in Committee, we laid considerable emphasis on the need to establish in law very exact wording that was in line with the convention and the protocol. Under the convention and the protocol, all those who ratify the convention should introduce legislation that is more or less identical, so as to ease the extradition from one country to another of those who have committed offences. If the offences are defined in exactly similar terms, that process is considerably eased. For that reason, we are reluctant to deviate from the wording in part II. I admit that the part of part II relating to warships is outside the convention, but it does not touch in any way upon the wording of agreements under the protocol. I have difficulty with the hon. Gentleman's proposals on that point.

I shall take the amendments in reverse order. The matter raised in amendment No. 14 is already covered by section 51 of the Criminal Law Act 1977. I did not say to the hon. Gentleman in Committee that I thought there was a gap. The hon. Gentleman will know rather better than I do that United Kingdom law applies on platforms by virtue of the Continental Shelf Act 1989. Subject to further comments that the hon. Gentleman might make, his point about somebody introducing a package which is meant to look like a bomb and cause anxiety or fear is extremely serious, but is already covered in United Kingdom law which I hope applies to platforms.

Mr. Doran: The Criminal Law Act 1977 certainly applies to gas platforms in the southern sector and to the gas platforms in Morecombe bay, but it would not apply to installations in the Scottish section of the North sea —those lying off Aberdeen and Shetland. There may be an equivalent measure, but that is a different point.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman helps me by saying that there may be an equivalent measure. I suspect that that is the case, but I shall try to get him some verification of that.

On amendment No. 13, I had hoped that, when we discussed the matter in Committee, I had gone a considerable way to allay the hon. Member's fears. I had hoped that I had gone so far as to make it possible for him not to introduce a further amendment on the subject. Perhaps I can remind the hon. Gentleman how far I went in Committee:

"I offer the hon. Gentleman some further comfort by telling him that, in Scotland where prosecutions are initiated by procurators fiscal, they have considerable discretion but are subject to directions from the Lord Advocate. When a new Act is introduced, the Lord Advocate circulates information and sets out the policy on prosecutions. I shall draw his attention to this part of the Bill and ask him to take account of the point that it gives effect to a convention on terrorist acts and is not intended to be used in industrial dispute cases."

The hon. Gentleman was generous when he said at column 105:

"I am especially grateful to the Minister for suggesting bringing the matter to the attention of the Lord Advocate . . . I am still concerned, although not enough to wish to press the matter to a vote"—

and at column 106:

"I take on board all the points that the Minister has made and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 13 February 1990; c. 104-106.]

I cannot say any more to the hon. Gentleman today than I did on that occasion. It is perfectly clear—as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State confirmed a moment ago in answer to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes)—that the Bill is about terrorist acts and security, and part II is about the Rome convention and protocol. If the Bill becomes an Act, I shall have no hesitation in fulfilling the undertaking that I gave to write to the Lord Advocate and point out to him the purpose for which the Bill is intended.

In regard to new clause 3, I well understand why the hon. Gentleman was so concerned about the incident which he reported to the Committee, and to which the Committee listened with great interest, and I understand why he would want to raise the matter again. I confirm that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to draw to his attention the points that the hon. Gentleman made in Committee and to ask him to consider the matter.

I also remind the hon. Gentleman of the point that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State made in Committee: there is a distinction between the measures proposed in the Bill to render more secure a platform, ship, aircraft or installation against attack or infiltration and the procedures that should be in place so that an installation may be evacuated in case of emergency. Sound evacuation procedures must be available to deal with a bomb, fire or another emergency.

The matters raised by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South go beyond the scope of the Bill. They apply to the security of platforms against not only terrorist attack but natural threats such as fire and explosion. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has issued the directions necessary for the purpose. Having received the letter from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and read the remarks of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, he may wish to reflect further on them, but at present he believes that new clause 3 is unnecessary.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is responsible for the safety of fixed platforms. He takes the view that a special regime for them is no more necessary than for, say, a large chemical factory on the mainland.

In important respects, fixed platforms differ from ships and aircraft. They do not move, except between operations, and they do not carry passengers or, equally important, passengers' luggage. There is little or no international element involved in them. Although the objectives of new clause 3 are laudable, they are outwith the scope of the Bill.

Although fixed platforms may appear to be sitting targets, they are, fortunately, difficult to approach or to board uninvited. With sophisticated equipment on board, platform managers know what is approaching and can communicate quickly with the mainland. The police can use their normal powers on platforms, and the ordinary criminal law applies.

I am not saying that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South does not have an important point. He was right to raise his concerns, and I do not blame him for using the opportunity in Committee and on Report to do so, but the proposal to tighten platform managers' response to an

emergency is well beyond the scope of the Bill. I hope that the regulations made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will cover those procedures. The hon. Gentleman has given my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the opportunity fully to consider those matters, but at this stage he does not wish to establish the special regime proposed in new clause 3.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I must admit to being disappointed by the Minister's response. He rested his case for not accepting new clause 3 or the amendments on the fact that they are well beyond the scope of the Bill. That defence carries little weight, because, had they been outwith the scope of the Bill, they would not have been accepted for debate. They are well within its scope and well worth arguing for.

It is difficult for hon. Members to appreciate the feelings of workers in the North sea. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) and I have had varying contacts with the survivors of Piper Alpha and of incidents such as Ocean Odyssey. Hon. Members think that they have some understanding of the psychology of workers in the North sea, but none of us appreciates the lingering horror for people directly involved in Piper Alpha or for anyone who lived through those dreadful hours from the moment when it was thought to be a minor incident to the sudden realisation of its full horror.

To some extent—perhaps this is a difficult argument to put—the fear of those not directly involved in Piper Alpha is greater than those directly involved. People's minds work differently. Those who have been through a traumatic incident often come to terms with it—some of those involved in Piper Alpha have returned to work in the North sea—whereas others who perhaps only saw what happened are more fearful. That uncertainty is of immense concern.

We are all worried about the time it takes to decide whether to evacuate. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South spoke of an incident involving a hoax bomb. Hon. Members' blood must have chilled at the prospect of people hanging about not knowing what was happening, not knowing the location of the suspected bomb and not knowing what might happen if wrong or precipitate action were taken. The security of workers on a platform must be as important as any other consideration.

4.45 pm

A fatal accident inquiry is about to begin into the Ocean Odyssey incident. That inquiry should have begun earlier, but the problem is how all the different arms of Government should dovetail to work together on security.

The Minister takes too narrow a view of security. I understand that the aim of the Bill is security and that its main provisions aim to avoid risk to life and prevent attack from another source. He said that fixed platforms are different from aircraft and ships, because they do not carry passengers and they move only rarely. Nevertheless, baggage is taken on board, and security measures are necessary to check it. If necessary, we must advocate overkill.

The Minister argues that the Bill covers all eventualities, that we are being too cautious and that perhaps we are asking for measures that would be better covered by another Bill, but there are few opportunities to rectify anomalies or loopholes. Goodness knows when we shall consider another Bill on offshore installations.

I hope that the Minister will not close his mind to accepting new clause 3 or the amendments. I hope that he will carefully read *Hansard* and accept that we must cover every possible eventuality and ensure that decisions to evacuate are taken earlier rather than later. We all hope that there will not be another major incident, because it is no good saying afterwards, "If evacuation had taken place half an hour earlier, the incident would have been avoided."

We should act quickly and positively on security. That may sometimes mean platform owners bearing a cost that they would rather not bear, but the safety and security of the individual is far more important than temporary loss of production, although that may be expensive.

I hope that the Minister will accept the amendments, which are not harmful or redundant. They offer an extra safety net, and the Minister would do well to accept them. he can do no less if he is interested in the safety and security of workers in the North sea.

Mr. Doran: I should like to take the Minister's points in order. He rightly reminded me of my comments in Committee and of my gratitude to him for saying that he would emphasise the position to the Lord Advocate, but the hon. Gentleman ignored the thrust of my speech, which concerned not so much legal powers and provisions as the way in which they could be used to threaten the work force in a way that would not arise onshore. I do not resile one bit from my comments then. I should be delighted to note what response the hon. Gentleman gets from the Lord Advocate, but that still does not mean that the work force will not be intimidated by the threat of prosecution under these serious provisions.

On the Minister's points about new clause 3, of course the Department of Energy is mainly responsible for the security of offshore platforms. However, I recently received a letter from the Minister which seemed to deny that responsibility. The hon. Gentleman also ignores his Department's responsibility to offshore platforms. As I understand it, the Department of Transport is responsible for firefighting, life-saving and evacuation equipment, and for standby vessels, supply boats and so on. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) made clear, we get few opportunities to raise such issues in the House. Nothing in our discussions has suggested to me that the new clause and the amendments are inappropriate.

The Minister must bear the views of the work force in mind. Nearly 30,000 people work in the offshore industry. The hon. Gentleman said that it was difficult to board an offshore platform and to put on board the type of device that would create problems similar to those in Morecambe bay. He again ignored the practical experience in the North sea. Nearly two thirds of the men who work offshore are employed by contractors, and there is little check on their record. Any sensible terrorist would find that that work provided the easiest route onto the platform. He would not follow the official route or try to sneak up in the darkest hours but would get a job on a standby vessel or with a contracting company. As we noted from the Morecambe bay incident, it is not difficult to get devices on board. Someone learned his way around a platform and planted the hoax device.

[Mr. Doran]

I wanted to make two points. First, this matter comes within the Department's responsibility. Secondly, it is clear that there was a breakdown in communications between the management of the platform and the authorities responsible for dealing with the emergency created on the Morecambe bay platform. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that this is the responsibility of the Department of Energy; his Department has responsibilities.

In the light of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North about the attitude of the work force offshore after the Piper Alpha disaster, it is not good enough to say that management and the Department of Energy will sort these matters out. Some of us have little confidence in the way in which that Department performs its functions in the North sea. To say the least, there is great scope for improvement, and this is just one example.

We do not intend to push the new clause to a vote. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 4

EXPENSES INCURRED IN IMPROVING SECURITY

'(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, the Secretary of State may reimburse to any person who—

(a) is the operator of one or more aircraft registered or operating in the United Kingdom, or

(b) is the manager of an aerodrome in the United Kingdom, or

(c) occupies any land forming part of an aerodrome in the United Kingdom, or

(d) is permitted to have access to a restricted zone of such an aerodrome for the purposes of the activities of a business carried on by him, or

(e) is the authority responsible for an air navigation installation, or

(f) is an air cargo agent

the whole or part of expenses incurred by such a person in improving standards of security in any matters within the control of that person.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations made by statutory instrument—

(a) determine the form, manner and extent of reimbursement;

(b) make reimbursement subject to approval by the Secretary of State of the expenses proposed to be incurred;

(c) make different provision for different cases.'.—*[Mr. Snape.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Minister of State will be relieved to hear that we do not intend the new clause to result in the Secretary of State personally, his two deputies or his Department being responsible for reimbursing security costs. For technical reasons, we were unable to table the amendment that we should have preferred, which would have reinstated the aviation security fund. We did not have a debate on that matter in Committee, but we feel that this is the appropriate stage to have one.

Sadly, all too often over the years, additional security has been introduced only after tragedy or disaster. As long ago as 1986, following the loss of the Air India 747 off the west coast of Ireland, the Select Committee on Transport looked into security at Britain's airports. It recommended the re-creation of the aviation security fund, which was established by the Labour Government in 1978 and disbanded by the present Administration in 1983.

The Government rejected the re-establishment of such a fund on the grounds that it was bureaucratic, complicated and costly to administer, although they neglected to give any figures to back their assertion. They said that the fund's re-establishment would provide little incentive to efficiency. Following the second tragedy, at Lockerbie, the Government said that the industry would set up its own security fund. We should be interested to know from the Minister of State what progress has been made, if any, and whether such a fund is envisaged.

Following the loss of the Air India 747, the Select Committee on Transport, under the chairmanship of Mr. Gordon Bagier, made a list of recommendations, one of which was the re-establishment of the aviation security fund. In paragraph 56 of the report, the Committee stated:

"Although airports and airlines requested that the original Aviation Security Fund be wound up, it is this Committee's opinion that many are far from happy with the consequences. Some of the larger airports—and especially the BAA—may have benefited financially from running their own operation, but security as a whole has not."

Those words were given additional emphasis after the loss of the Pan Am 747 over Lockerbie at Christmas 1988. The Select Committee continued:

"The abolition of the fund has encouraged the splintering of security operations away from each other, so that too frequently the priority of security operators is to circumscribe as tightly as possible the limits of their own responsibility, rather than look to the needs of the whole system."

That criticism was echoed by the Transport Select Committee in its latest report on these matters. We are aware that, all too often, the present system appears to be based more upon the persuasive powers of those arguing to extract money from the Treasury than on the security needs of Britain's airports.

The Select Committee report continued:

"the Committee again draws attention to the European Parliament 'Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Transport on security at airports' which states 'the main question an institution with legislative powers such as the European Community should ask itself is whether these powers can be used to increase clarity, effectiveness and co-ordination between international and national rules governing security duties at Community airports'. For the reasons explained above, the Committee would encourage the Minister and the Department to pursue assiduously any such initiatives."

We should be interested to hear from the Minister of State how assiduously the Department has been pursuing these initiatives, especially in the light of paragraph 57 of the Select Committee report, which states:

"The public is concerned that airport security should be adequate and recent research has suggested that it would be willing to pay for it."

All research, but especially that since Lockerbie, has revealed a similar conclusion—that the public would be prepared to have a fee added to their tickets, to be spent on security. They and Opposition Members believe that, in that way, adequate funds could be made available for the provision of such a necessary facility at Britain's airports. Notwithstanding that report, the Government have not re-established the aviation security fund.

5 pm

Following Lockerbie, the Select Committee on Transport, this time under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), met again. In its report, published in July 1989,

the Committee made similar recommendations and gave some reasons for doing so. Paragraph 30 of the report says:

"The levy"

that is, the aviation security levy—

"did provide a means whereby airlines and the travelling public could see how much they were paying for security and make a judgment as to whether that represented value for money. At present, payment for security is subsumed under the general ground-handling charge. If greater security measures are imposed on an airport and they have, for example, to buy more x-ray machines, the cost is either accepted by the airport or passed on to the airlines. If it is passed on to the airlines, they have the choice of whether or not to pass it on to the passenger. Airlines often complain that BAA refuses to give them a breakdown on the amounts spent on security."

In making that complaint, the airlines are not alone. The BAA is not very keen to provide that sort of information to any of us. The authority maintains that, as security is an integral part of airport operations, it is difficult to extract exact financial information on aspects of it. I may be getting cynical in my old age, but I should hazard a guess that, if the aviation security fund were re-established, BAA plc would have no difficulty in justifying claims on it to meet expenditure at the airports that it controls. There would be no argument then about the difficulty of identifying the cost of such operations.

The Select Committee did not accept that argument. Paragraph 30 of the 1989 report, from which I quoted a moment ago, says:

"Modern accounting techniques should make it possible to break down the cost of security by specific operation."

So say all of us.

We should be interested to hear from the Minister of State what justification he thinks there is for the BAA's view. Regrettably, the Department of Transport, for the second time, declined to re-establish an aviation security fund. In paragraph XV of their observations on the Select Committee's recommendations, the Government say:

"The Government is not convinced by the Committee's arguments for re-establishing an aviation security fund paid for by a levy on passengers. The reasons for winding up the fund in 1983 remain valid despite the need now for substantially larger expenditure on aviation security measures. The fund proved to be bureaucratic, complicated and costly to administer."

When civil servants get their teeth into a phrase like that they cannot resist regurgitating it, no matter how many years later they are asked to consider a particular problem. They are good at regurgitating, but they are not particularly good at explaining why they came up with that response in the first place. Again we press the Minister of State to tell us how much the aviation security fund that was set up in 1978 cost to administer over the years, and why he or his Department believe that it was

"bureaucratic, complicated and costly to administer."

The Government's response goes on:

"In the Government's view it did not, and would not if re-established, help forward the aviation security programme."

It is easy to make such statements, but more difficult to justify them. I hope that tonight the Minister will produce some justification for that rather abrupt and sweeping conclusion.

The response continues:

"The particular measure mentioned in paragraph 31—the rebuilding of terminals to ensure the proper separation of incoming and outgoing passengers—is being pursued, but the Government believes that the most cost-effective solution will be achieved if the basic requirement is met by works financed by the airport authorities concerned."

But the airport authorities themselves are the first to complain about the cost of such work. We believe that the reintroduction of the levy to which this amendment refers, and on which the debate concentrates, would go a long way towards meeting those charges.

Paragraph XV of the Government's response concludes:

"The Government remains determined that no funding problem shall obstruct the implementation of the measures in the aviation security programme."

Again, the Minister will have to forgive Opposition Members for displaying some scepticism. We all know what financial pressures, whether in connection with security or with any other matter, are put on Ministers and Departments.

We are offering the Government an opportunity to look again at this problem and to tell the House that they will consider sympathetically the re-establishment of an aviation security fund. We ask for no more than that. For the reasons that I have already outlined, we do not ask them to accept the new clause, but I hope that the Minister of State will agree that the present position with regard to the funding of security is unsatisfactory, causes widespread concern among the travelling public, and leads Members on both sides of the House to the conclusion that, all too often, gaps are left in airport security that could be plugged if adequate funds were provided.

We await with interest the Minister's reply. As I have said, this is a matter which—also for technical reasons—we did not manage to discuss in Committee. The re-establishment of such a fund and of such a levy is something that Opposition Members have constantly advocated. Indeed, we voted against abolition of the fund in 1983. It seems to us that its re-establishment would be a comparatively painless means of funding the security measures that we all want to be introduced at Britain's airports. It is a step that would certainly be supported by the travelling public at large and, at least privately, by a good proportion of the aviation industry.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I do not often congratulate the Opposition, but I congratulate them today on this new clause. As a member of the Select Committee on Transport since it was set up, I have taken an interest in this subject, especially on the transfer of aviation from the Department of Trade to the Department of Transport. Indeed, it was I who suggested, after the Air India crash, the original study into airport security.

It behoves my hon. Friend to answer the points made by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). We ought to be told exactly why the unanimous decision of the Committee in relation to the levy was not accepted. We seem to be told, "Don't worry about costs. The money will be provided." The purpose of my intervention is to probe that a little further. We need an assurance that the money will be provided to ensure that adequate security is made available.

One of the first things that the Committee realised when it looked into this matter was that the problem arises from the fact that at any major airport there is dual responsibility for security: it is the responsibility of those who own and operate the airport and it is also the

[Mr. Peter Fry]

responsibility of the airline. The gaps in security arrangements that often appear arise out of that dichotomy of responsibility.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of international disasters but, as far as I am aware, our airports have not been the cause of any serious security problem. I put it on record that our airports and airlines have an excellent record in this respect, but—and there is a "but"—there is no doubt that those who engage in international terrorism are becoming more and more sophisticated. That means that our methods of detecting terrorists must also become more sophisticated. It would be idle not to accept that many in the aviation industry are concerned about the cost of ensuring a safer travelling scene. When the Committee first looked into the question, British Caledonian was still up and flying. It quoted to us the cost of the machines that it would have to install to satisfy itself that it had done all it could to protect the travelling public, and bluntly told us that it could not afford it.

That leads us to the fundamental question. If the Secretary of State decides that a certain level of search of persons, of aircraft or of cargo is necessary, he must also satisfy himself that the searches will be adequately carried out; otherwise, his reassurances to the travelling public will be empty words. As my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware, we can never achieve 100 per cent. security in relation to aircraft movement, but ever more sophisticated machinery is appearing and could be employed.

We have first to consider the sheer cost of introducing the equipment. How does my hon. Friend imagine that we shall ensure that all the foreign airlines will have the best equipment available to deal with the problem?

Moreover, it is not just a question of equipment: it is also a question of providing the environment in which that equipment can operate. I was appalled to discover on a visit to Gatwick that, immediately after the Lockerbie disaster, one American airline had brought in the most up-to-date piece of equipment to try to check all the baggage that went on its aircraft from Gatwick to the United States and had been told that there was no room for it. It took the British Airports Authority six months to find room at Gatwick to put that machinery into operation.

Given that airline's will to do the best for its passengers, it is worrying to think that the provision of space may inhibit the use of security equipment. We must consider the cost not only of the equipment but of providing room for the equipment to operate properly. I can understand the BAA's point of view, because its room is expensive and it can let it for a variety of purposes at a high revenue. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, if the authority is not willing to give up large spaces at a few moments' notice, which was exactly what happened after the Lockerbie disaster. My hon. Friend must show that sufficient pressure can be placed on bodies such as the BAA to ensure that the necessary space is provided.

No matter how good our security systems may be, the security of passengers flying in and out of this country will also depend partly upon the security at other airports in other countries. One of the main arguments in favour of the levy is that, if properly administered, it would apply not just to our major airports but to our minor airports, which find it difficult to meet the expense of installing the latest security equipment, and perhaps—with international co-operation—it could be extended to cover other airports, such as those in the Third world, where security is very lax. In the last resort, our security arrangements are truly interdependent and international.

I hope that my hon. Friend will look again at the new clause and try to spell out to my satisfaction proposals suggesting that the Government are aware of the dichotomy between airline and airport in relation to responsibility for security and that he is aware of the problems of the high cost of equipment and of the problem and cost of providing space for that equipment.

5.15 pm

The Committee did not reach its recommendations lightly on either occasion. It reached them in a non-partisan manner and after considerable deliberation. As the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) made clear, we have not really had a satisfactory explanation of why the levy cannot be reintroduced. I believe that airport security perturbs the travelling public, and I think that many people would be happy to pay a reasonable charge for the comfort of knowing that everything is being done that can be done.

The great danger of the present system is that it will give rise to the suspicion that not everything is being spent that might be spent to ensure that the strongest possible security arrangements are made. At one stage in our investigations, we were given evidence, which we were unable to verify, that one improvement to security at Heathrow had not taken place because the budget for that year had been used up. The improvement therefore had to be delayed. We do not want to give the travelling public the impression that money will not be forthcoming to afford them the peace of mind they need.

I hope that my hon. Friend will satisfy me on those points.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) is very knowledgeable about these matters, having twice served on the Committee that reported specifically on security matters.

The terrible truth about security is that the price is always too high until people die. Those who say glibly that we have a high level of security at our airports and point to the changes that have taken place even in the past five years do themselves no great credit if they pretend that our service is capable of ensuring that no great terrorist incidents will occur in future, and I know that the Government have never taken that position.

For many airlines, security is an overhead that slips down the accounting priorities as incidents recede into the past. Immediately after a bad crash in which many lives are lost, there is enormous outcry about the facilities that are provided at airports. Unfortunately, it is a question of pounds and pence and, as that pressure recedes, airlines are likely to relax their arrangements. They will not do so consciously—I do not think that they set out to lower their standards—but those of us who use airports constantly—the larger airports are classic examples—know that the sheer press of passengers is leading increasingly to security measures that are not as exhaustive or intensive as they should be.

New machinery is being developed all the time, but one of the safest methods of ensuring that terrorists cannot place explosive devices among innocent travellers going about their lawful affairs is to ensure that proper searching, profiling and investigation take place at the point at which the passenger enters the airport. That is absolutely vital.

El Al representatives would say that the price of security is a life, and that there is no way in which we can put a price on a life. We have a responsibility in this House to tell the airlines that it is not enough to install security companies which, because of the pressure of bodies and freight and the number of people using the services, will inevitably monitor only a tiny percentage of the goods or people flying out of our airports. If that can be said of a country which has suffered the enormous trauma of the Lockerbie crash, how can we expect Third-world countries, which already face enormous problems of overseas debt, to invest in security systems which would safeguard our people?

British people travel all over the world on many different airlines. They have the right to ask that they travel in safety and not in fear. The explosion of air travel in my lifetime means that the modern child regards the aircraft in the way that I, as a child, regarded road transport or trains—as a perfectly routine form of transport. That would be the case but for those who try constantly to find ways to attract the attention of the world to their specific, narrow and murderous interests by destroying forms of transport used by many people.

Hon. Members will be aware that the Select Committee on Transport does not comprise hon. Members from only one political party. It has a wide membership and we have taken very moving and important evidence from those involved in the Lockerbie disaster. The Select Committee examined the manufacture of aircraft, and specific problems with the safety of aircraft interiors; those matters will be reported upon in future. Above all, the Select Committee clearly stated that security was a legitimate expense and that, if it was to be provided at the level necessary for safeguarding our people, it had to be paid for.

It would be extraordinary if increasing deregulation lowered the price of air flight for the ordinary passenger but raised the price of providing proper security systems, in such a way that many international airlines began to regard security as an unnecessary expense. We could deal with that problem, and also with the constant battle behind the scenes between the British Airports Authority, the airlines and freight shippers, if we provided sufficient funds to equip and build proper security checkpoints in all our airports—and I mean all. As hub travel develops, more people will come into the airline system at small airports, and they may not always have had their baggage or goods properly checked.

I do not understand the Government's objection to this proposal. They can hardly pretend that they disapprove of taxes that are unwieldy, bureaucratic and expensive to apply. Given that they created the poll tax, that is not a legitimate or feasible response.

The Government believe that passengers are not prepared to pay to ensure that they are travelling safely. Who asked the passengers? Who asked the mothers who put their children on planes to send them back to school four times a year? Who asked the people who take their families on charter flights for their once-a-year holiday? Who asked the families whose parents are at risk every time they travel from one part of Europe to another on business? I do not believe that the Government have put those questions to the people.

It is too late to consider security issues when we see the front pages of tabloid newspapers carrying horrific pictures of destroyed planes and bodies. One way that we can provide cash is to say to the passenger, "A levy will work and produce results. Will you support us in introducing a levy?" If the Government do not do that, they will be moving responsibility from themselves on to those least likely—even if they are able—to provide the proper quality of service. The cost to this country over the next 10 years may be very high in terms of human life.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Before I come to the points made by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), I want to comment on a matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry). He repeated a point that I have heard made so often. He said that one reason why space is not made available at airports, particularly those operated by the British Airports Authority, is that the authority could not be bothered to do that or could not afford it. That is grossly unfair.

I hasten to add that I have no interest to declare in the matter, other than that an enormous number of my constituents work at Heathrow airport, and they always feel slighted when they are accused of doing a shoddy job. However, the issue is not as simple as that described by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough.

I assume that the reference by my hon. Friend to the equipment at Gatwick was a reference to the TNA machine. We are not arguing that selling a few pairs of knickers or a few newspapers is more important than safety. The security machines about which we are concerned are very large and heavy and are not readily available. Indeed, the environmental lobby in the United States considers the radiation which those machines emit to be unsafe.

The security machines to which I am referring weigh many tonnes. If they were installed in many of our airport terminals, they would fall through the floor and destroy the terminal.

Mr. Snape: I must confess that I have heard the hon. Gentleman put that argument rather better before. As we are anxious to maintain cross-party consensus on airport security, does the hon. Gentleman believe that the BAA would be as ready to accept a TNA machine, bearing in mind the drawbacks, as it is to install Sock Shop or Knickerbox units around Gatwick airport? Is it not legitimate for some of us to express suspicions that, as there is revenue to be earned from the latter and space to be taken up through the former, the BAA is more likely to opt for commercial occupancy of space at Heathrow than to allocate that space for security purposes?

Mr. Wilshire: Most certainly I would defend the hon. Gentleman's right to make those points, just as I am sure that he would defend my right to say that he is talking absolute nonsense when he suggests that that was the motivation of the BAA or any other airport operator. Of course all airport and airline operators want the best possible security and will fall over backwards to make that possible.

Mr. Fry: Does my hon. Friend believe that it is satisfactory that a machine was present and ready to be brought into operation at Gatwick, but it took six months before that machine was operational? There is no criticism about the commercial nature of the BAA. However, does my hon. Friend believe that a six-month delay was satisfactory, in view of what happened at Lockerbie and the public concern over aviation security?

Mr. Wilshire: When we consider a delay, it is important to be sure how it came about. One of the worst possible things to do with aviation security is to make statements to the effect that we will do this or that in a few moments and everything will be marvellous. That misleads the public and does no good. If it takes a week, a month or even a year to get things right, I shall defend taking the necessary time.

The important thing to consider is that one machine on its own is of no earthly use at all. They are large and they are slow—they do about 600 bags an hour. At peak time at a busy airport such as Gatwick, about 8,000 bags must be screened every hour. It would take until the year 2000 to build sufficient machines to cover all major airports in the world. It is misleading simply to say, "All we need is one of those machines at Gatwick, and bingo—all will be well."

5.30 pm

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. His hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) made the simple point that a machine was offered for trial, and it took six months to find the necessary space. That point is simple but important.

Mr. Wilshire: I accept that. I thought that I had covered the point that one must do things in the right order. I do not have the facts on exactly why it took six months. I hope that the hon. Lady will give me the facts. If it turns out that there was a delay for the sake of delay—I hold no brief for BAA or for anybody else—and if criticism is deserved—surprise, surprise, I will criticise. However, until I see the evidence, I shall not do so.

My main reason for intervening was to deal with the comments by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East. I have bad news for him. He made a point about accountants and about BAA's financial procedures. I shall not rise to that criticism, because my experience of accountants over the years—

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman disappoints me.

Mr. Wilshire: I know that I disappoint the hon. Gentleman. However, as he said, it is a cross-party matter.

My experience of accountants over the years is that, if they must do something, they will end up doing it. If it were to become necessary, I am sure that they could do something. I agree with that. However, I do not agree with the basic premise of returning to a security fund. I recognise the argument that there are good reasons for doing so, but I hope that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East will recognise the bad implications. On balance, the bad wins over the good.

I have three concerns about this matter. First, if one specifies how much one spends on security, one is revealing information to those who would like to know exactly what one is doing. One may not consider that on its own to be a justifiable reason, but it is true. My second concern is that, if we set a sum that should be spent on security, we will invite the response, "Fine, we will spend that, and we will discharge our responsibilities." There should be an open-ended commitment to spend whatever is necessary to provide the best possible security, not to set a sum of money. My third concern is that, if we specify sums of money, which will presumably vary from airport to airport, we will invite comparisons.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that no one had asked the travelling public. I have done research, not on the travelling public but on the maritime sector, in which there is more choice than there is in the use of airports around London—cruise liners. I examined what was happening at the international cruise terminal at Tilbury. The operators said that their charge was £3 per passenger. They said that they were having great difficulties, because the charge at Southampton and elsewhere could be as little as less than £1.

People were not flocking to Tilbury because it is the safest place to board a ship. Ship operators were saying "It is cheaper to go to Southampton than to Tilbury, so we will go there." Similarly, passengers were asking, "Why should we pay this much more when, at Southampton, we would pay much less?" I accept that that may be anecdotal, but it is not a one-way argument to say that, the more one charges, the happier people will be.

Mr. Snape: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how the 1978 aviation security fund actually worked and how the moneys that were levied from that fund were dispersed around United Kingdom airports for security purposes?

Mr. Wilshire: My reservation is that, however the money is dispersed, one publicly states how much one will spend, and what it will be spent on. Those matters outweigh the hon. Gentleman's arguments.

I am against the amendments giving the Secretary of State powers to pay, because they would lead to the argument, "All right, the Government will pay, so we need not bother." It will result in more buck passing, not less. Airport operators and airlines already try to pass the buck to one another, saying, "The airport should pay," or, "The airline should pay." If we introduce the Government into that, there will be three sides shuffling the buck, and that will make matters worse, not better.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I do not know whether I should begin by declaring an interest as a frequent air traveller. I suppose that I am in the air about twice a week—sadly, about 100 times a year. Before I give the impression that I am a notorious freeloader or free-tripper, I should say that virtually every trip is between London and my constituency in Aberdeen. I have great experience of how passengers regard security, and the cost of security.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) was extremely complimentary to the Opposition. I certainly respond in kind, because I know of his deep interest in the matter. We have always approached it in a non-partisan way and on a fairly uncontroversial note. That is why the remarks of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) are rather surprising. Of course, there are pros and cons in all such matters.

I wholly support the new clause, because it would provide a mechanism whereby money could be found to pay not only for immediate security but for research. It identifies exactly what the costs are and where they are to

be found. I am sometimes nauseated when I occasionally suggest to airline or airport representatives that it will cost money to provide proper security, and they say, "We can't afford it—it will eat into the profits." Security must be afforded. It does not matter how the money is collected; the passenger or cargo shipper pays. Security costs will be passed on by the airport owner, the airline owner or the operator. No commercial organisation in the world would say, "We shall run at a loss to provide proper safety." It is a matter of cost-efficiency and profit making.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, people's perception of safety varies depending on the time of year and how long it is since there was a major disaster.

A major safety measure is that, if baggage is booked on to an aircraft, but the passenger does not get on the plane, the plane cannot fly. All the baggage must be taken off, put on the tarmac, identified and put back on the plane. The baggage of the passenger who has not checked in is then taken away to be examined. It is remarkable how often people book on a flight, get to the airport and check in their baggage, but, for some reason, do not turn up. That has happened to me six times this year on my way to Aberdeen.

Passengers are desperate to get home or to go away on business. There is at least an hour's delay, when baggage is unaccompanied. The passengers' perception is, "Heck, why do we have to hang about so long?" However, they did not say that immediately after Lockerbie. If I have my facts right, the package that caused the Lockerbie explosion was transferred from another plane. British airports' response is that responsibility for baggage checked in at another airport lies with the carrier. I do not agree. If baggage is put on one aircraft and transferred to another, it should be rechecked at every airport. Of course, people say, "What a waste of time hanging about." Generally, if they are asked whether they are willing to spend more on the levy to improve security, they will say yes.

I accept—here I agree with the hon. Member for Spelthorne—that the first time that people see a 1 per cent. surcharge for security on their ticket, they will say, "What is all this about?" Of course there are dilemmas, but we must make a judgment.

We must face the dire possibility of a terrorist attack. With modern technology, the terrorist is becoming more sophisticated and clever and may have access to better technology than that available for finding and identifying packages. We must always run ahead and anticipate the threat. We must do a great deal of research into new methods of discovering explosives, timing devices and so on.

Often airport authorities do not appear to use the equipment that they have. I am fed up to the teeth, as many passengers are, with turning up at terminal 1 at Heathrow at busy times to find masses of people queueing from the place where baggage goes through the X-ray machines right back as far as the shops. One is almost forced to buy something in a shop to pass the time. There are four X-ray machines, but seldom are more than two in operation. If there is a backlog of people waiting to pass through, there, is immense pressure on the staff.

We are all irritated by delays, even though we know it is for our safety. When I ask why only two machines are operating, I am told that the staff are not available to operate them. Security staff have asked me to speak to the British Airports Authority, because they are under tremendous pressure. Every bag goes through the X-ray machine and the staff have to look at every image on the screen. There is a random search of perhaps one in three or one in five bags. There is a great deal of pressure on staff, even though the facilities are there, which can lead to something slipping through.

Mr. Wilshire: Before the hon. Gentleman finishes his point about lack of staff at an airport such as Heathrow, will he consider the difficulties of recruiting people? There is not so much a lack of opportunities as a lack of people applying for the jobs. Another difficulty is the requirement to check back over 20 years of a person's previous work experience. That makes it a long job. It can take anything up to 16 weeks before a vacancy can be filled.

Mr. Hughes There may be difficulties, but the British Airports Authority has never told me that the reason why it has insufficient staff is that it is difficult to recruit or that it takes a long time to check credentials. I have been told that it cannot carry staff over a period simply to cope with short-term busy periods. People cannot be employed between, say, 5 pm and 7 pm when there is a huge mass of people through security simply to sit around for the rest of the day. People usually work shifts of seven or eight hours.

Personnel should be available and on call. All the machines available should be used, not just for the convenience of passengers, although that is important, but in order to make sure that people are not under pressure to let stuff go through. I do not accept that the reason for delays and the lack of staff is that not enough people apply for the jobs. Perhaps, if that is the case, BAA should consider the wages it pays. However, that is not a matter that I shall traverse tonight.

We must examine the methods by which money is found. It is not good enough simply to say that it is up to the airline or the airport authority to provide the cash. They will not provide it if there is pressure on their profits. It is as simple as that. However, the money has to be found. It would be far better to apply a levy to every ticket and for the Secretary of State to reimburse the money.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Spelthorne cite the example of Tilbury and Southampton. He said that operators would claim as a bonus—I hope that he is listening, because I am responding to his point——

Mr. Wilshire: Avidly.

Mr. Hughes: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would show on his face that he was listening.

I do not doubt his word that people say, "Come to Southampton because the security is cheaper than elsewhere." I am surprised that he does not condemn whichever shipping company he was referring to for taking that attitude, instead of using it as a bonus point for his argument. It is disgraceful that people should say, "Come to us because our security is cheaper," as if cheaper security were something that people sought. It is a bogus argument, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Wilshire: If the hon. Gentleman was under the impression that I was saying that cheap security was an advertising plus, I apologise. That was not what I intended to say. I said that both shipping lines and passengers regard security as an opportunity to cut costs. Shipping

[Mr. Wilshire]

lines and passengers appear to prefer cheaper security. I do not applaud that; I deplore it. I was merely observing that that is what happens.

5.45 pm

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that clarification and for accepting the point of my argument.

If a percentage of the cost of the ticket is levied and collected centrally, it could be distributed centrally so that there does not appear to be a difference between the cost of tickets at different airports.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): The hon. Gentleman makes his pitch for the idea of a levy collected as a percentage of the cost of ticket, which would be held centrally and disbursed among airports to ensure proper security. Does he accept that security is as strong as the weakest link in the international chain? How would he deal with the problems of international terrorism and inadequate security at other airports—for example, in Third-world countries? To operate properly, any levy system would have to be operated by the International Civil Aviation Organisation on an international basis. Everyone would have to comply with it, because otherwise it would be pointless.

Mr. Hughes: I do not know what proportion of people buy tickets in this country and travel out and back compared to the proportion who buy tickets outside and travel in and out again. If a levy were collected on every passenger's fare, it would be possible to organise collection of the levy from all carriers, whether they originated in Britain or elsewhere. People doing return journeys have to leave the country again. The argument that people who buy a ticket in the United States, for example, do not benefit from the levy because the point of origin is not in Britain, does not hold. Such passengers have to return. There would have to be an international agreement for collecting the money.

I shall not be diverted into a detailed discussion about safety. The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) argued that, if one boards a flight outside this country, one does not know the standard of safety. That is true, but there is nothing that one can do about it. There is no way to guarantee the safety of someone who boards an aircraft in another country, whether Japan, Australia or elsewhere. I hope that, if we take the lead, we can persuade other countries to do likewise and enhance the system of security throughout the world.

Carriers and airport authorities wish to provide the safest possible method of travel because that is their business. If a major disaster is caused by terrorist activity, they will lose money through cancellations. However, this is not an issue about cash—as my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has said, the debate is about the price of lack of safety, which is the price of a life.

The new clause would provide a good way of collecting the money and of ensuring that people understand what it is all about. It would also provide the Government with a better opportunity for putting leverage on everyone, to ensure that they do the research and apply the existing equipment as soon as possible.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) made not only his own speech but mine. His speech was full of references to previous statements of Government policy. As the Government's policy on this matter is fairly well understood, it may not be necessary for me to dwell on it for long.

Two distinct issues have been raised in the debate. The first is whether there should be Government grants to fund an aviation security programme, and the second is whether we should recycle money from the airlines, through Government, and back to the airports.

The first point about whether there should be Government grants for aviation security is the issue addressed specifically by the hon. Gentleman's new clause. However, the new clause is unnecessary, because the power that it seeks to place in the Secretary of State already exists. Under section 32 of the Aviation Security Act 1982, as amended by this Bill, the Secretary of State can, with the consent of the Treasury, defray, out of moneys provided by Parliament, all or part of the expenses of the persons described in subsection (1) of the new clause for purposes to which part II of the 1982 Act applies—that is, protection of aircraft, aerodromes and air navigation installations against acts of violence.

I do not wish to extend the list in the way in which the hon. Gentleman proposes in his new clause, but the power already exists. I do not want to deny for a moment that the Government have not sought to use that power of making grants for security purposes, because we believe that security should be paid for by the airport, the airline and the passenger. I have no doubt that passengers are willing to pay for it; it is simply a question of how they are asked to pay for it.

I am satisfied with the present arrangements, which are that the Government specify the level of security arrangements that must be made in airports. Money does not enter into those considerations. People are required to meet the directions that the Secretary of State makes, and the Secretary of State makes the directions that he considers appropriate for the level of security he thinks fit, reflecting the degree of risk assessed for him by the security forces from time to time.

I have listened carefully to all the speeches, but no hon. Member has argued that our present security arrangements are inadequate or, if they are, how the directions should be reinforced. I have heard no evidence that finance or lack of finance could be said to be prejudicing the security in our airports. Some hon. Members seemed to assume that, without a fund recycled through the Government, there must be a lack of money and a lack of security provision. That is wholly illogical and fallacious.

The way in which the Government arrived at the present position of wishing to wind up the old aviation security fund and the reasons for doing so were spelt out for Parliament in a statement by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Cockfield in another place. Extensive consultations preceded that decision, which embraced not only the airlines and airport operators, but also the British Air Line Pilots Association, the Transport and General Workers Union, the Air Transport Users Committee, the Association of British Travel Agents Ltd. and the International Air Transport Association. At that time, the Government weighed all the pros and cons of having a centralised fund into which moneys were paid and then paid out again.

The Department of Trade was responsible for such matters in those days and considered the measures that applied elsewhere. My right hon. and noble Friend said:

"The research showed that in continental Europe, with certain exceptions, airport security duties were generally carried out by national and local police and as a rule were not directly funded by revenue from airport operations. In contrast the research also showed that in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Switzerland, searching was paid for by airlines, and that in the United States and Canada all other aspects of airport security were also, in the end, paid for by the airlines. No other country operated a fund system along the lines of the United Kingdom model."

My right hon. and noble Friend thought that the arguments were fairly evenly balanced, but said that he was concerned that

"unnecessary and complex procedures would be avoided, incentives to carry out security measures efficiently would be increased, and cross-subsidisation eliminated, if the fund were wound up and airports and airlines financed security costs in the same way as their other operating expenditure."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 29 July 1982, Vol. 434, c. 359.]

Therefore, over a period, the Government have been straightforward in explaining how they have arrived at this position.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East wanted to know why we thought that it would be bureaucratic and unnecessary to proceed in this way. I remind him that, in the old days, a fund level per passenger had to be set, airport charges had to be collected, payments by the airports had to be made to the Government, claims by the airports and airlines for expenditure that they were to incur had to be made and then assessed and paid by the Department. The net result was that the security measures that the Government required to be taken were paid for by the passenger, but only after that enormous rigmarole, and the great procedure of recycling the money.

The hon. Gentleman wanted to know how much all that would cost. If we were were to reinstate it today, it would probably cost my Department about £50,000 for the officials who would be needed to implement the provisions, but that would be only the beginning——

Mr. Snape: Appoint a quango.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman says, "Appoint a quango." I am sure that he would be happy about that, but I believe that that is an unjustified cost, which does not even begin to deal with the costs that would unnecessarily fall on the airline industry. I repeat that the Government's approach is to specify the level of security and to ensure that that level is met—and that has nothing to do with money.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East was also concerned that there should be frankness and that the airports should tell the airlines the cost of security. For the sake of brevity, I refer him to what I said at columns 67 and 68 in Committee. I accept that any customer and supplier relationship should result in a willingness by the supplier to account for the reasoning behind his prices, and pointed out that section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 provides that designated airports must have adequate facilities for discussing the management of the airports. The Civil Aviation Authority conducts a quinquennial review of specified airports, covering user charges, including security.

That point also covers many of the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), whom I was pleased to see in his place, because he speaks with great experience and considerable knowledge of these matters. The question whether up-to-date equipment is made available is really a question about whether the Government have specified the level of security that is to be met. The Government will insist that that level is adhered to by the operators. It has nothing to do with whether sufficient funding is available, because the Government will always require airports and airlines to take such measures.

My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) referred to the difficulties of the Third world. I am not sure that a fund would be the right way to set about the problem. When dealing with the Third world, our problems go far beyond funding. It is not just a question of installing the correct machinery; it is also a question of the training and the discipline that should go hand in hand with it. Each nation that has great experience of aviation is now trying to contact those Third-world countries with which it has a special relationship, so that we can help in a variety of ways to establish the appropriate aviation security programmes. Our own airlines continue to have responsibilities when they operate to those places.

6 pm

Space at airports was debated in Committee. It is our intention that all hold baggage should be screened before it goes into the aircraft. That will take some time to achieve, but we wish to proceed in an ordered fashion towards that goal. We do not wish to find that certain airlines that come first in the queue are pre-empting space. It is important that machines should be installed and measures introduced in the order dictated by the security considerations that prevail in each instance, so that we meet the maximum security risk in the most timely fashion.

Some of the remarks about machinery being installed at airports were rather unfair. These are immensely complex matters that bear on passenger safety, space, and getting things in the right place. As my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) said, with the TNA machine the issue of radioactivity has to be considered. The necessary certificate from the United States National Radiological Protection Board has only recently been granted. In fact, it was granted last week. As I have said, these are extremely complex matters.

I do not believe that there would be any advantage in recycling moneys in a long and cumbersome fashion, as some hon. Members have proposed. If they are saying that there should be powers for the Secretary of State, in certain circumstances, to be able to defray moneys with the approval of the Treasury, I tell the House that those powers already exist. I have heard no evidence during the debate that our levels of security are inadequate. I have heard no evidence that lack of funding has produced an undesirable situation. I have heard nothing to make me think that the recycling of moneys through a fund commends itself to me any more than it commended itself to Lord Cockfield when a thorough review was conducted, after considerable consultation, in 1982.

The House will be aware of the results which were announced by my noble Friend. I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Snape: I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will have found the Minister's reply somewhat disappointing. The main thrust of his argument was that

[Mr. Snape]

security had not suffered since the abolition of the aviation security levy, because the Government had at all times provided adequate funds. I have before me a draft parliamentary answer which was prepared for the previous Secretary of State for Transport after the Lockerbie disaster. It is the contention of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself that aviation security—this was argued by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—comes to the forefront only after a disaster. The Minister of State has told us that funds have never been lacking and security has always been adequate.

In the draft reply, however—it looks as if it was the result of a planted question—there is reference to a package of measures to provide better security at restricted areas, the screening of all baggage and doubling the strength of the Department's aviation security division. Those provisions are introduced directly as a result of tragedy. The contention of the Opposition—it is the unanimous contention of two Select Committees over the past few years—is that these measures could be better provided for financially if adequate funds were made available from the beginning through the provision of an aviation security levy.

Mr. Portillo: Now that the hon. Gentleman has the floor again, will he use the opportunity to make good a deficiency in his previous remarks? Will he demonstrate that there has been a lack of financing or that our security has suffered through a lack of finance, or that it would be improved by recycling moneys in a wasteful fashion through Government?

Mr. Snape: My purpose is to illustrate the argument that security issues arise only as a result of tragedy. Money has not been spent. Had it been available, it could and should have been spent to improve security. If it had been spent in the form of an aviation security levy, perhaps some of the gaps outlined in the draft repy to which I have referred would have been closed earlier, and perhaps before the Lockerbie disaster. I can put it no higher than that.

I ask the House to recollect the debate that took place on the Civil Aviation Bill on 16 January 1978, when the levy was first introduced. The then spokesman for the then Conservative Opposition was the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), who is now the Secretary of State for Transport. In those days, he was an avid supporter of the setting up of the aviation security fund. During the debate, he said:

"Many people argue that it is the responsibility of the State to protect its citizens and therefore the cost of providing that protection"—

that is, security at airports—

"should fall on the general body of taxpayers. It is argued that hijackers are seeking to pressure not individual airlines or airports but Governments, and therefore Governments should assume responsibility for meeting the cost of protection."

He then said:

"It is our considered view"—

that is, the Conservative party's considered view, as it was the Labour Government's view at that time—

"that there are even stronger arguments in favour of transferring the cost—some £19 million"—

that says much about inflation over the past decade, as well as security—

"from the taxpayers generally to those who benefit from the service provided, namely, those who travel by air. Such a proposal recognises something that many Labour Members are often reluctant to recognise—there is no such thing as a free lunch."

The right hon. Member for Hertsmere, who is now the Secretary of State for Transport, has changed his mind twice. He is against the provision of an aviation security levy and he is a living, walking and talking exponent of the free lunch if ever I saw one in this place. The right hon. Gentleman concluded that debate in a way that I hope will still appeal to some of his hon. Friends who have listened to today's debate:

"Why should the vast majority, who never set foot aboard an aeroplane, contribute to the cost which arises directly and identifiably from those who do? Why should pensioners, who have never travelled by plane in their lives and who never will, pay the costs of people who go on holiday to Majorca and to the Caribbean?"—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1978; Vol. 942, c. 78-80.]

The right hon. Gentleman has revised his views since then, but the Opposition have not. That is the reason——

Mr. Portillo: I am genuinely puzzled by the argument that leads the hon. Gentleman to claim that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was speaking on the hon. Gentleman's side of the argument. My right hon. Friend said that, in future, the costs would be borne by those who travel and not by the British taxpayer. That is what we stand for. That is the present arrangement. The hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that the fund should be recycled through Government, a proposal with which we disagree, or that it should be paid for by taxpayers generally. My right hon. Friend was explicit when he said that he thought that it would be wrong for taxpayers to bear the burden.

Mr. Snape: It is clear that the Minister has not read the report of the entire debate. We were talking about the principle of the aviation security levy in 1978. The right hon. Member for Hertsmere, who is now the Secretary of State, was then in favour of that sort of levy at the time, and so were the then Labour Government. We have remained consistent, even if the Secretary of State and his colleagues on the Treasury Bench have not. That is why we shall be pressing the new clause to a Division. Conservative Members who share our concern about security should vote for the new clause.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the logic of the Minister of State is at fault? He said in defence of the argument against the levy that the Government were prepared to find the money. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Snape: The illogical nature of the Minister's reply will dawn on him when he reads the *Hansard* report of our debate tomorrow.

I cannot find a sufficiently emotive phrase to end the debate again, and I do not think that the House would wish me to do so. The Opposition intend to pursue the matter this evening, I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House who support the principle of better security will vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 203.

Division No. 101] **[6.08 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Janner, Greville
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor

Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

EXTENSION OF POWER TO REQUIRE PROMOTION OF SEARCHES

Mr. Snape: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 4, line 10, at end add—

'(5) Before issuing the direction under subsection (1) above the Secretary of State shall seek the views of the manager of the aerodrome concerned.'.

The amendment deals with consultations on regional airports. It arises from the debate on the aviation security fund and, under the amendment, we have the opportunity to talk briefly abou' the costs for regional airports, post-Lockerbie. One of the reasons why Opposition Members plead for greater consultation with regional airport directors is that, post-Lockerbie, additional costs were incurred by regional airports for screening people who enter restricted areas there.

I understand from the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities that Birmingham airport has paid £86,000 in capital costs and will pay £514,000 for the running costs of additional safety requirements in the current year. East Midlands airport has had to pay capital costs of £405,000—which is an enormous sum for that airport—and current operating costs are £260,000. Luton airport has had to pay capital costs of £364,000 and current operating costs are £414,000 this year for new security measures.

I should have thought that hon. Members on both sides of the House would be desperately anxious that regional airports should not become the weak link in any security chain. I hope that the Under-Secretary will agree that security measures required at regional airports must be related to the perceived level of threat at those airports, particularly under the present financial regime.

In our view, one of the other positive arguments in favour of an aviation security fund is that it could meet the additional costs at regional airports, rather than the airports having to meet the costs.

The amendment would ensure that, before any additional measure was introduced at a regional airport, the widest possible consultation with airport managers, or directors—to give them their modern title—took place so that proposals were sensible and relevant to the individual airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: The way that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has moved the amendment is interesting, particularly in the light of previous debates. He drew some parallels with the security fund.

I think that the case made and the evidence quoted by the hon. Gentleman prove that we are laying down strict criteria for airports to abide by. We expect them to do that, and we feel that they should try to arrange finance for it. Therefore, the examples that the hon. Gentleman gave show that the requirements are costing airports money, but they are finding the money.

I know that the whole House agrees on the importance of regional airports for our aviation policy and in providing services for people in the region. We cannot excuse those airports from the necessity of aviation security, and it would be undesirable and wrong to do so. I accept that the Government have to ensure that the security measures required——

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: Yes, but very briefly.

Sir D. Smith: Further to what the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said, will my hon. Friend bear it in mind that, although we are talking about regional airports, many of them are becoming more international, for example, at Birmingham airport the range of flights is expanding all the time?

Mr. McLoughlin: Most hon. Members accept the benefits that regional airports can bring to the regions and to the people who live in them. I take my hon. Friend's point.

The security fund was dealt with adequately and properly in the previous debate, in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. The Government must ensure that the security measures that it requires are both practical and necessary. That is why the Department has been discussing draft directions with those whom we consider it desirable to consult. Such consultations enable the Department to understand the practical difficulties that the industry faces when implementing new security measures, and it also allows the industry to understand why measures are necessary to meet security problems. That is one of the reasons why we have decided to issue directions rather than trying to say what should happen at an individual airport by bringing in a statute law. By their very nature, directions can change to allow for the practical details at individual airports.

The amendment would handicap rather than enhance procedures. It requires the Secretary of State only to seek advice, and there is no requirement to take those views into account, but, what is more important, there is no exemption from statutory consultation when the direction has been issued as a matter of urgency, and that would certainly worry us.

Statutory consultations, as envisaged in the amendment, could result in the Department having to contact as many as 50 aerodrome managers before any directions under the proposed section 13A could be made. It would be unlikely to add anything to the present system of informal consultation. The amendment would require aerodrome managers, who are not so directed under clause 2, to give their views about directions which would require others to have searches carried out. That seems to us to be misconceived, because it does not require the Secretary of

State to seek the views of those directly affected, and we have no intention of imposing unnecessary or unworkable security requirements on the industry.

Therefore, I assure the House that, except in cases of extreme emergency, the Department will continue to ensure that there is a dialogue between it and the industry about the long-term objectives and developments on aviation security, and about the details of proposed directions. The Department will, of course, take into account the views of the industry, while at the same time trying to persuade it that the proposed measures are necessary, feasible and reasonable. I ask the House to reject the amendment.

6.30 pm

Mr. Snape: That was a disappointing reply. The Minister has said that consultation takes place between the Department and regional airports; we are merely seeking to formalise that arrangement by asking the Secretary of State to obtain the views of the management at the aeorodrome concerned. Surely that is not too much to ask. I remind the Minister that the Government have forced the establishment of local authority airports as arm's-length companies; should not they acknowledge the financial implications of their security directives, and seek the veiws of managers before introducing them?

I am also disappointed by the Minister's failure to concede that the security measures required at regional airports are expensive, and that they should be related to a perceived threat. In Committee, he said that the perceived threat was greater in some airports than in others. In the absence of a national security levy, many airports are identifying a separate security element in their landing charges, but that does not overcome the fact that the cost of security measures at individual airports is not related to passenger throughput.

It is a pity that the Minister does not agree that airport managers' views should be sought before directions are introduced, but I do not wish to press the amendment to a Division; therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 1, in page 21, line 31, leave out from 'charterer' to 'which' in line 33 and insert

'manager or master of—
(i) a British ship, or
(ii) any other ship'.

No. 2, in page 23, line 15, leave out 'or manager' and insert 'manager or master'.

No. 3, in page 23, line 28, leave out from 'charterer' to 'requiring' in line 29 and insert

'manager or master of—
(a) a British ship, or
(b) any other ship which is in a harbour area'.

No. 4, in page 35, line 42, leave out 'or manager' and insert 'manager or master'.

No. 5, in page 35, line 47, leave out from beginning to 'in' and insert

'and the authorised person certifies'.

No. 6, in page 36, line 1, leave out from beginning to 'deliver' and insert

'Where the authorised person does not himself detain the ship, he shall deliver the certificate to the officer detaining the ship.

(2A) On detaining the ship, the authorised person or other officer shall'.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Clause 36

INSPECTION OF SHIPS AND HARBOUR AREAS

Ms. Ruddock: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 36, line 35, at end insert—

'(2A) An authorised person may require the owner, charterer, manager or master of a ship, the harbour authority or occupier, to provide him with such information as shall enable the authorised person to assess whether any special conditions should be included in a direction issued under this Act.'

Clause 36 gives the Secretary of State powers of inspection to enable him to decide whether to make a direction under clauses 21 to 24, or to ascertain whether any direction or enforcement notice has been complied with. In carrying out inspections under clause 36, the authorised person will clearly need to have in mind the powers set out in those clauses—powers to search people and property, to detain ships if necessary and to carry out modifications or alterations in harbours or on ships. No provision exists, however, to take account of the terms and conditions of work for people who will be on the receiving end of those security measures.

Let us suppose that an inspector is concerned about security on a ship, and that it is clear to him that the person or persons responsible for security is, or are, suffering from gross fatigue. Is it not more than probable that he will consider that crew members—and the master himself—are unlikely to be vigilant about security if they are suffering from fatigue?

In our view, good security depends on people being viligant, alert and able to make quick and accurate decisions. Our amendment seeks to give the inspector power to require information, so that he can assess whether special conditions should be included in any direction that he is to issue. He should, for example, be able to ask how long people have been on duty: that could apply not only to personnel working on the ship, but to security guards at harbours. He should also be able to take into account the fitness of the people involved in ensuring that security provisions are as effective as possible.

In Committee, we discussed private security services at some length. We identified many deficiencies in their organisation, and in the personnel that they sought to recruit; we also referred to a report by the National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers—NUMAST—about fatigue on ships. The report states:

"Fatigue can be deadly. Its effects and dangers are well-known and acknowledged in many transport industries by controls on employees' hours—yet there are no effective limits on the hours worked by seafarers.

Ships . . . carry a range of cargoes, some capable of causing massive environmental damage. Ferries and cruise ships carry passengers, specialist ships service North Sea oil and gas installations. In all these sectors, the shipping industry has clear responsibilities to provide safe services"—

and, of course, to have regard to security.

"NUMAST has extensively researched the problems posed by fatigue at sea. Consultations with members have produced evidence of excessive working hours throughout the shipping industry. Evidence of breakdowns in personal performance as a result of excessive hours has also been given to NUMAST.

Increasing commercial pressures—including reduced crew levels, greater reliance upon new technology and faster turnround times in ports—are exacerbating the problem faced by our members"—

that is, members of crews and masters of ships.

"Changes in relationship between shipowner, managing company and charterers can distance shipowners from

[Ms. Ruddock]

masters and officers. Demands of oil and gas operators in the North Sea override seamanlike judgement on safety factors, including hours worked."

For all those reasons, we thought it necessary to table amendment No. 12 to enable all the relevant factors to be taken into account when inspections are being conducted. There is ample evidence that in the shipping industry—which places no limits on the number of hours that can be worked—people are working excessive hours, with the result that their ability to cope with difficult circumstances is affected dramatically. That must have a major impact on their ability to handle security matters.

I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has already given notice of a related question that I wish to ask the Minister. Is he aware of an incident that occurred at the end of last year on a P and O ferry using Dover harbour? A report has reached us recently of a bomb being found on board such a ship. My hon. Friend has written to the Minister and we shall expect a reply in due course, but I should like to know now whether he knows of such an incident.

If inspectors are given the necessary information, and consider that it has a bearing on the implementation of the Bill, we believe that they should have the power to make special conditions to rectify what we consider to be a glaring omission in maritime law—the lack of regulation of working hours.

Mr. McLoughlin: Let me deal first with the hon. Lady's question about the report of a device being found on a ferry. I have not yet received the letter from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), although I understand that it is on its way, and I shall carry out a thorough investigation when it arrives. It would be entirely inappropriate for me to comment on a report that I have not yet seen, as I have had no opportunity to check it.

Ms. Ruddock: With respect, my question was not whether the Minister had received the letter or was in a position to reply, but whether he was aware of such an incident. He does not need to have received the letter to answer the question.

Mr. McLoughlin: I thought that I made it clear that I know of no such incident.

The Government are unable to accept amendment No. 12, for two reasons. First, it is always for the Secretary of State to decide which requirements should be included in any direction. It would be wholly inappropriate for an authorised person to have such a power, especially as the amendment provides that that should happen after the Secretary of State has made his initial direction. Secondly, under clause 19(1), the Secretary of State already has wide-ranging powers to require information, these being "in connection with the exercise by the Secretary of State of his functions under this Part of this Act."

We therefore cannot accept the amendment. I ask the House to reject it.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 41

SEA CARGO AGENTS

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 40, line 9, leave out 'or manager' and insert 'manager or master'.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Clause 43

ANNUAL REPORT BY SECRETARY OF STATE AS TO NOTICES AND DIRECTIONS UNDER PART III

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 41, line 20, leave out 'or managers' and insert 'managers or masters'.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Clause 49

OFFENCES BY BODIES CORPORATE

Mr. Portillo: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 47, line 35, after 'this Act' insert

'(including any provision of Part III as applied by regulations made under section 41 of this Act) or under regulations made under section 42 of this Act'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 9.

Mr. Portillo These are technical amendments. They extend the scope of clause 49 and of section 37 of the Aviation Security Act 1982 in respect of regulations relating to air and sea cargo agents and regulations requiring the reporting of aviation and maritime security occurrences. If an offence under any of these regulations is committed by a body corporate, and with the connivance of, or because of the neglect of, a director or other similar senior officer of the company, that person will also be guilty of the offence.

Amendment agreed to.

New Schedule

PROVISIONS RELATING TO COMPENSATION

1. This Schedule applies to compensation under section *(Compensation in respect of certain measures taken under Part III)* of this Act (in this Schedule referred to as "the principal section")

2. No compensation to which this Schedule applies shall be payable unless the person to whom it is payable in accordance with the principal section (or in accordance with regulations made under paragraph 5 below) serves on the person by whom the measures in question were taken a notice in writing claiming compensation under that section, and that notice is served before the end of the period of two years from the completion of the measures.

3. In relation to any measures taken by any person on land outside a harbour area, any reference in the principal section to a direction or enforcement notice, or to compliance with a direction or enforcement notice, is to be construed as if subsection (6) of section 26 of this Act were omitted.

4. In calculating value for any of the purposes of the principal section—

(a) rules (2) to (4) of the rules set out in section 5 of the Land Compensation Act 1961 apply with the necessary modifications, and

(b) if the interest to be valued is subject to a mortgage, it is to be treated as if it were not subject to the mortgage.

5. Regulations made by the Secretary of State by statutory instrument may make provision—

(a) requiring compensation to which this Schedule applies, in such cases as may be specified in the

regulations, to be paid to a person other than the person entitled to it in accordance with the principal section,

(b) as to the application of any compensation to which this Schedule applies, or any part of it, in cases where the right to claim compensation is exercisable by reference to an interest in land which is subject to a mortgage, or to a rent-charge, or to the trusts of a settlement, or, in Scotland, to a feuduty or ground annual or to the purposes of a trust, or which was so subject at a time specified in the regulations, or

(c) as to any assumptions to be made, or matters to be taken into or left out of account, for the purpose of assessing any compensation to which this Schedule applies.

6. A statutory instrument containing regulations made under paragraph 5 above shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

7. Any dispute arising under the principal section or under this Schedule, whether as to the right to any compensation or as to the amount of any compensation or otherwise, shall be referred to and determined by the Lands Tribunal.

8. In the application of this Schedule to Scotland—

(a) the reference in paragraph 4(a) to section 5 of the Land Compensation Act 1961 is to be construed as a reference to section 12 of the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1963, and

(b) the reference in paragraph 7 to the Lands Tribunal is to be construed as a reference to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

9. In the application of this Schedule to Northern Ireland—

(a) the reference in paragraph 4(a) to section 5 of the Land Compensation Act 1961 is to be construed, notwithstanding paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to the Land Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1982 (which confines the operation of that Order to matters within the legislative competence of the Parliament of Northern Ireland), as a reference to Article 6(1) of that Order, and

(b) the reference in paragraph 7 to the Lands Tribunal is to be construed as a reference to the Lands Tribunal for Northern Ireland.

10. In this Schedule "mortgage" includes any charge or lien on any property for securing money or money's worth, and any heritable security within the meaning of section 9(8) of the Conveyancing and Feudal Reform (Scotland) Act 1970."—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 1

Further amendments of the Aviation Security Act 1982

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 56, line 11, at end insert—

'17A. In section 37 of that Act (offences by bodies corporate) for "or under regulations made under section 33" there is substituted "(including any provision of Part II as applied by regulations made under section 21F of this Act) or under regulations made under section 21G."'.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

6.41 pm

Mr. Portillo: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

A number of hon. Members wish to speak on Third Reading, so my speech will be brief. The Bill has received general support throughout its stages. We had an interesting Second Reading debate on a number of matters relating to aviation and maritime security. However, there were no significant differences of opinion about the Bill's proposals. Harmony continued throughout the Committee proceedings.

Today, we have had our most serious disagreements. The positions adopted by the Government and the Opposition have been typical. Our response, predictably, has been that we should minimise the role of Government where it is unnecessary to extend it. The Opposition's response, predictably, has been that the establishment of a central fund to recycle money could add to security. I did not expect the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) to agree with me, but I am pleased that it was only a rare moment of disagreement between the two sides.

Outside the House, the Bill's proposals have been widely welcomed, certainly by the aviation industry and the police. However, they have been given a less warm welcome by the maritime industry, which believes that the existing voluntary arrangements are working satisfactorily. I can reassure the maritime industry that the legislation will ensure that security measures are applied even-handedly to foreign as well as to British ships. The Government believe that voluntary action is no longer adequate and that standards should be set and enforced throughout the industry. I assure the House that the legal sanctions will probably be used infrequently. However, it is important that reserve powers are available to be used if needed.

I believe that we have made important progress towards establishing what I hope will become an Act of Parliament which will enable us to tighten up our defences against terrorism in the aviation and maritime industries. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.44 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I made it clear from the outset in Committee that I support all moves to strengthen security arrangements at our airports and seaports. I was concerned about the extent of the powers contained in the Bill, as first printed, but I am pleased to say that many of my fears were allayed in Committee. The Minister knows that I have always been concerned about the strange anomaly that, to protect the freedom of our people—in this case, freedom of movement—we are giving the Government and other designated people the very powers that, in different circumstances, could be used to take freedom away.

Although we have uppermost in our minds the fact that we are endeavouring to defeat terrorism, the extensive powers of searches of persons and property—which are to be authorised by the owners and operators of our aerodromes, ports and the ships and aircraft that use our ports and by certain other categories of person under directives from the Secretary of State—are still very wide.

As drafted, the Bill makes it clear that most of the searches will be carried out by private security personnel. In the case of our harbours, the searches are likely to be conducted by hand. There is still no code of conduct or set of standards to cover such searches; nor is there any mechanism to monitor the process or to set up a complaints procedure. I mentioned that point in Committee on two separate occasions. I still consider such a mechanism to be essential. I am still worried about the extensive nature of this power of search, which can reach land, property and personnel far removed from any airport or harbour.

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

In Committee, I tried to amend the clause relating to the use of firearms. I am mindful that, in reply, the Minister said:

"I advise the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) that his amendment No. 99 has considerable attraction. I intend to reconsider the phraseology of this part of the Bill, although I am not sure that what he proposes is strictly necessary. it is clear that the mechanism for securing searches by armed constables would operate when a person receiving a direction got in touch with the chief constable of a local police force, who would ensure that arms were carried by the policemen. That would happen in any case, but there maybe advantage in reviewing the wording.

A specific fault in the hon. Gentleman's wording is that it would require constables to be authorised to carry firearms, but that is not enough. We want to ensure that they actually carry them if that has been specified in the direction. For that reason, I shall not accept his wording. However, I should like to review it to see whether we can provide something better." —*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 15 February 1990; c. 139.]

I see no evidence of that reconsideration, or of a review or of the provison of something better. Perhaps the Minister could say why.

As I have already stated, with the exceptions that I have mentioned, I feel that this is a good Bill. I therefore support it, as it will be an effective vehicle to combat terrorism.

6.47 pm

Mr. Wilshire: I was pleased to welcome the Bill when it was given its Second Reading. Both in Committee and on Report, it has been further strengthened by the changes that have been made. However, I do not believe that the process should stop here. My hon. Friends the Ministers for Public Transport and for Aviation and Shipping are well aware that several matters still need to be considered. When the Bill reaches another place, I hope that it will be possible to introduce further changes.

The Bill improves security both at airports and at seaports. It clarifies responsibilities that have never been clarified before. The Secretary of State's role is defined. The Bill provides him with new powers to carry out his responsibilities. It ensures that everyone with access to airside at airports and with access to ships is responsible for public safety.

The Bill also improves the checking and monitoring of security. The powers of the inspectorate at airports are to be strengthened. The Bill will provide it with greater powers to carry out checks. However, the suggestion that, because there will be more inspectors, there will, for the first time, be random tests of the system is far from the truth. All sorts of people have been trying to test the system for a long time, but more inspectors will be a welcome addition. One of the most important improvements made in Committee was the insertion of the requirement that all future lapses in security must be reported.

The Bill provides effective sanctions that will enable enforcement to take place properly. It activates the Montreal protocol and creates new offences; the entire Committee agreed that that was about time too.

The Bill closes some loopholes that have existed for some time. In future, businesses that operate at an airport but also have premises away from the airport will find that security will catch up with them wherever they may be operating. That is not before time.

In Committee, it was also made clear that the cargo procedures, particularly at airports, would be tightened up. I welcome that, as does the entire aviation industry, but there is still some way to go; more thought is necessary before we can be absolutely certain that we have done everything possible to improve our existing cargo systems. Although the Bill contains all those worthwhile provisions, we have to remember that no Bill will ever be a cure-all for security, as 100 per cent. security is impossible. However many Bills go through the House, the personal responsibility of every passenger and employee and the eternal vigilance of all concerned are the only ways to maximise security, even when the Bill is enacted.

When we pass the Bill, we need to avoid three traps. First, we must not pretend to the public that we can achieve a level of security that cannot be attained, because we do not have the technology. Secondly, we must beware of bringing the system to a halt by demanding too many checks on huge numbers of people. Thirdly, as I said on Second Reading, we must avoid always looking backwards to try to close loopholes after a terrorist has found them. Having said that, I wish the Bill well. I believe that it is a practical response to a deeply worrying problem for the public.

6.52 pm

Mr. Snape: Earlier in our deliberations, the Minister of State said that, at every stage of the Bill, the debate has been fairly harmonious and good-tempered. We endorse those sentiments. Right from the outset, the Opposition have been in a somewhat unusual position. Normally, we oppose Government legislation, but on this occasion we felt that there was much to be said in favour of the Bill, although we were unhappy with some aspects of it and felt that some loopholes should be closed. We have not been successful in closing those loopholes, but at each stage we were grateful to the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State for listening to the arguments, and for responding positively when they were able to do so and courteously when they were not. That is not always the case on such legislation.

From the outset, the Opposition believed and insisted that there should be a time schedule within which all aircraft baggage for transfer and in hold, as well as that carried by passengers, should be properly screened. We have not yet reached that laudable objective, although we have secured a pledge from the Minister of State that the Government will work towards it and, hopefully, it will be achieved sooner rather than later.

We remain of the view that the major obstacle to achieving that desirable goal is money. Notwithstanding the views that have been expressed this evening, we firmly believe that an aviation security fund will be necessary to fund security adequately at Britain's airports.

In Committee, we introduced the concept that a threat to damage or interfere with the safe passage of an airliner should be an offence. That view was shared by many Members on both sides of the Committee. Perhaps the Government's attitude will change. The perceived threat to airlines and airliners is often worrying to passengers. All too often, those who make such threats are aware that some people feel terrified, or at least uncomfortable, when they board an aircraft. The examples that we discussed in

Committee showed that the threats themselves caused enormous concern to passengers and led to heavy delays and extra expense for the airlines involved.

Most of the maritime clauses of the Bill have been dealt with more than adequately by my hon. Friends the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran). We remain concerned and unhappy about the amount of private policing that takes place and will continue to take place around our docks and harbours.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) is not present, although I am sure there are good reasons for his absence. Some of the amendments that he tabled in Committee left us in no doubt about the concern of the Police Federation that so many policing duties are bring carried out by private security firms. In Committee, the Opposition attempted to do something about the principle of non-police officers doing work that should be carried out by the police.

We attempted to persuade the Minister to accept amendments that would have laid down minimum standards of pay and working conditions within the private security industry before those private security firms were employed at docks, harbours or airports. As we were unsuccessful in our attempts to persuade the Government that such amendments were necessary, we hope that their refusal to accede to those eminently reasonable demands will not rebound on them in the form of further breaches of security particularly at our docks and harbours in future.

We believe that the Bill is basically good. All right hon. and hon. Members are anxious that security at our airports, harbours and docks is the best that money can buy, regardless of where that money comes from. The fact that there was so much harmony in Committee illustrates the depth of feeling and concern, which crosses party lines. We do not whole-heartedly support every clause. We tried to close one or two gaps in the Bill, and the fact that we were unable to do so causes us concern. The parts of the Bill that must be strengthened will be considered in another place, so I conclude by expressing the Opposition's thanks to the Minister for Public Transport and the Under-Secretary for a courteous and informative debate, and I hope that they would reciprocate those sentiments.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Midland Metro Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am aware that there have been objections to the private Bill procedure. The word "Parliament" derives from the French "parler"—to talk. Supporters of the Bill do not object to the Bill being debated, but moving its Second Reading is the only way it can be heard. We must therefore follow that procedure. The House may consider a better procedure in the future, and that might commend itself, but at present this is the only procedure available.

One or two hon. Members wish to oppose the Bill, and one of the happy outcomes of this debate is that they will be able to do so. I hope that they will bear in mind—I shall refer to this in detail later—the referendum carried out by the promoters, showing a majority in favour of the Bill among those who will be affected by it. Some 62 per cent. of those polled were in favour, 15 per cent. opposed it and 22 per cent. were uncertain.

The Bill follows a long tradition that was initiated by Bills in the 18th century to construct canals and by Bills in the last century to construct railways. The same routine was used when the Birmingham-London railway was constructed in 1832. The canal that runs through my constituency was subject to the same procedure.

Transportation patterns have changed enormously in the past few decades. When I served on the transport committee in Birmingham, it was said that the black country was no more than a bicycle ride away from a chap's place of work or home. That was the limit of his transport horizons. I remember being told by the then general manager that there was no connection between the black country and Birmingham, and that no one wished to travel on such a route. How different transport has become. We now have lines between Wolverhampton, the black country and Birmingham which were established by the passing of the first Act to build a line connecting Wolverhampton to Birmingham.

All the surrounding areas have changed. The reference in "Jerusalem" to the dark satanic mills of industry no longer applies. They are now much more pleasant to work in and more pleasant environmentally. The back-to-back houses of the early industrial revolution have changed and are now pleasant villas in which to live. Their occupants want an alternative transport system. We have seen green changes, environmental facelifting and cosmetic work throughout the area. One of the advantages of the Bill is that, wherever the line runs, it will continue that trail of environmentally acceptable measures.

Birmingham and many black country towns used to have tramways. There was a horse trough in the centre of Moseley, from which horses would drink before pulling trams on the last part of their journey up St. Mary's hill. Trams were abolished in the 1950s and in my office I have a picture of the last tram.

I believe that the Midland metro will provide a better form of transport than the trams. I travelled down Bristol road to school on a tram. It was a safe method of transport, and the only method that did not provide one with an excuse for being late. The trams were open-ended, and many a friendly cap used to exit from either end of them.

[Mr. David Gilroy Bevan]

Constraints on transport in urban areas have led to demands for an alternative form of transport. In previous decades, attempts were made to legislate against the car. They have not been successful, and car usage has increased enormously. It was my lot as second chairman of the West Midlands passenger transport authority to draw up the west midlands transport plan and to include a paragraph that we should bring back an electric light railway to supplement existing transport systems. We had introduced the cross-city railway line in Tyseley, and the 80 marshalling places for it, on a shoestring of about £8 million, compared with the £300 million that Newcastle was lucky to obtain for its heavy rail system. We did not begrudge Newcastle that excellent system, which we inspected many times, but we had to manage on a shoestring, and in only the past few weeks has the Secretary of State for Transport given permission for the electrification of that cross-city line, which we hope will be completed within two years. That is bad enough. The lead-in time was long, and we hope that the Bill will give us a chance to make up some of the lost time and lost line.

Transport debates have always dealt with the differences between highways and railways, but there has been no need for that. Under the integrated transport system initiated following the Midland Metro Act 1989, buses and cars were provided with free car parks, enabling their passengers to use the trains. Usage on one line increased by 1,500 per cent.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that probably the only justification for ever providing free car parking is as part of an integrated transport system? Does he agree that free parking provided by employers and others should be a taxable perk to encourage people to use transit systems?

Mr. Bevan: I note that point. I would not like to comment on tax-free perks, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the necessity for free parking. I have always resisted any attempt to levy a charge in the midlands.

Five new stations have been built in Birmingham this century. Many more have been refurbished; dozens of free car parks have been provided; and the lines have been upgraded to take heavy rolling stock. Much more must be done. The Bill authorises the construction of the second and third stages of the network. Its capital costs will be substantial—about £224 million for the Birmingham-Solihull route and £139 million for the black country route. I hope that the stock will be similar to that operating in Grenoble, which is the watershed in terms of light railways. The system is ecologically elegant, being whisper-quiet and attractive. I hope that it will be made in Britain, perhaps even in Birmingham.

Progress on a previous Bill stopped because the proposal would have destroyed far too much property and interfered with the rights of citizens and was for the wrong place at the wrong time. The task was again taken up by the West Midlands passenger transport executive, now called Centro. It has aimed to introduce a rapid rail system in the best possible way, wherever possible using disused railway lines or using designated or on-street tramways. Although there have been a few objections, the project has cross-party support on all seven metropolitan district councils—Birmingham city council and the metropolitan borough councils of Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

The west midlands metro system will play an important part in reversing the declining use of public transport. It will make a major contribution in regenerating derelict or economically depressed areas and will bring major benefits in improving the environment. The system is a constant factor of success elsewhere, being well-used and patronised throughout the world. On my visits as a member of the Select Committee on Transport, I have been impressed by rapid rail transit systems in the United States, Canada and throughout Europe, where towns vie with one another to introduce their own metropolitan transit system. I am determined that our area will not be behind. In making this move, we will initiate one of the most modern systems in the world.

Extensive consultation has been carried out. The Bill's sponsors respectfully ask that the House give the Bill a Second Reading. The procedure that we are following differs slightly from the normal procedure for a public Bill. Granting a Second Reading will merely allow the Bill to proceed to Committee where it will be fully examined.

The Bill's aims are to relieve traffic congestion, bring about economic regeneration, ensure increased use of the public transport network and, attendant upon the work, bring about environmental improvements. The first stage provides for 20 km of line linking Birmingham Snow Hill, a station that has recently been rebuilt, to Wolverhampton, at a cost of £60 million. The Bill providing for that work received the Royal Assent in November 1989, without objection.

The light transit system provided for by this legislation will consist of a modern lightweight tram which has low floor boarding and runs on a standard gauge track. It will be fume-free, being powered by overhead electricity. It will be able to operate on either designated track or on shared road. It will be similar to the Grenoble design, of which I have full details, although I shall merely say that it will have a two-unit capacity providing room for 250 people, 75 seated and the rest standing.

The system's benefits are that it will relieve traffic congestion and increase mobility because of the low floor, it is safe, environmentally friendly, fume-free and reliable and it compares favourably with other modes of transport. For my money, it is the finest system that I have seen. It will provide direct access to towns and shopping centres. Its advantages over roads are that it is safer, has lower costs and has less environmental impact. Recent transport studies do not propose roads as a solution to transport needs in urban areas. The aim of the state-of-the-art systems is to get the right mix between roads and rail, including light railways and other forms of transport.

This system has much lower costs than heavy rail and has less environmental impact. It is more flexible, being capable of negotiating tighter bends and steeper gradients. It can share the roads with other traffic and it gives greater penetration into city areas. Compares with buses, it is more reliable, cleaner and fume-free, has greater capacity, is faster and more modern and has an upmarket image. Compared with the requirements of busways and bus priorities, it uses less space, is easier to control, can share road space and is cheaper to operate. Compared with trolley buses, it is faster and more efficient. Many other comparisons could be made.

The Bill provides for a transport route from Birmingham Five Ways, one of the five stations built this century. It will go underground through the city centre to the Birmingham Heartlands development area, a 2,000-acre redevelopment, to Bromford, Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Arlington business park and the national exhibition centre, which is already a world beater, making Birmingham and the midlands one of the most important strategic areas in the world——

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Hear, hear.

Mr. Bevan: The route runs through the constituency of my hon. Friend who has applauded its existence. I am sure that he will applaud the necessary transport survey. The route will take in Birmingham international railway station and Birmingham international airport. The length will be 26 km, and there will be 34 stops. Twenty-four vehicles will be required, the frequency will be every five minutes, and the cost will be £240 million.

Then the line will go underground—under the city centre. Underground stations will serve the new international convention centre, the town hall, New street and Corporation street. The line will surface at Aston university and the general hospital—if the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and I, together with our colleagues, are able to have that preserved in the health plan. The underground section will cost £100 million.

From Wolverhampton, line 3 will go to Dudley town centre, via Wednesfield, Walsall, Darlaston and Wednesbury. It will cross line 1 at the Sandwell 2000 development. It will serve Tipton, too. Indeed, it will link all those towns in the black country whose citizens used to want to cover small distances. The length will be 26 km, there will be 32 stops and 11 vehicles, frequency will be every 10 minutes, and the cost will be £139 million.

Major feasibility studies were undertaken to choose the route. These were partly funded by the EEC. Suffice it to say that, in the end, the district councils selected the routes on the basis of minimum effect on residential property. In the case of line 1, no residential property whatsoever will be taken out. In the case of line 2, only some residential property in a redevelopment area will be affected.

Potential passenger use, cost, environmental effects and development proposals, as well as practicability of construction, were borne in mind. Each passenger stop will be 60 m long—sufficient to accommodate two units. Stops will be located about every 600 to 800 m, as in the case of bus stops. Kerb height will be twice the average, so that in most places the step will be precisely level. There will be a slightly inclined ramp to give pushchairs and wheelchairs access. Incidentally, a disabled passenger will be able to press a button on the tram, at the point of exit, to bring out a pneumatic step to bridge the two-inch gap between the vehicle and the kerb. Thus there will be completely safe and smooth exit for disabled people.

No decisions about stops have yet been made. Ultimately that will be a matter for the council, after consultation with local residents. Consultation has followed a very intense pattern. Since the launch in 1987, many videos have been shown and a dedicated exhibition bus has toured round. In 1989, 300 six-minute videos were sent to residents' associations, community groups and local political parties; 64,000 leaflets were distributed; 95 presentations were given to business groups, chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, breakfast clubs, local groups and CBI groups; 17 exhibitions were mounted at conferences and transport events; and the exhibition bus appeared on 72 days at 40 venues.

Regarding the Bill, 115,000 leaflets were distributed within 1 km of the line of route immediately after the local council announced the proposed route. Ten different leaflets were produced. PTE or Centro officers attended 40 consultation venues or meetings.

In the case of line 2, in Birmingham 14,000 leaflets were distributed within 1 km of the proposed route—4,000 covering the city centre section and 10,000 for the area outside the city centre to the Solihull boundary; 13 consultation venues were organised by Centro and council officers, and were attended by 1,400 members of the public; an exhibition lasting three and a half weeks was arranged at Bromford neighbourhood office; public meetings were organised and publicised by Centro and Birmingham city council, and 239 people attended; and there were 26 meetings with businesses and business groups.

In Solihull, 25,000 leaflets were distributed throughout northern Solihull; two further leaflets—4,500 copies of one, and 14,000 of the other—were distributed to advise people of further consultation venues.

Mr. Rooker: I have been waiting for the hon. Gentleman to come to the end of his list, and I think he has now done so.

Mr. Bevan: I have not come to the end of it.

Mr. Rooker: In that case, I shall put my question when he has finished.

Mr. Bevan: I come now to line 3. In Walsall, 36,000 leaflets—three versions covering sections of the route—were distributed to households within 1 km of the proposed route; and 11 consultation venues were organised and attended by Centro and council officers.

In Wolverhampton, 12,000 leaflets were distributed to households within 1 km of the proposed line of route; personal letters were sent to occupiers of 130 properties directly affected by the route; three consultation venues were organised, with Centro and council officers in attendance, and these were attended by 200 people; and an exhibition was held at New Cross hospital.

In Sandwell, 12,000 leaflets were distributed to households within 1 km of the proposed line of route; three consultation venues were organised and attended by Centro and council officers, and these attracted 400 people.

In Dudley, personal letters, with Sandwell leaflets, were sent to the occupiers of 32 homes along Birmingham New road; and 600 people visited the exhibition bus in Dudley market place.

Mr. Rooker: I am sorry for having interrupted the hon. Gentleman before he completed his list. That list of consultations in respect of the three routes is very impressive, although I have not taken it all in. In any case, my constituency is not affected. Despite this massive public relations operation, the real test is whether people were listened to. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how many changes were made in the proposed route as a result of all these consultations?

Mr. Bevan: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is necessary that the routes be promulgated along with the private Bill. Thus, by the time the Bill is published, the route is almost fixed. However, by that time all those who have a legitimate interest in the route, and who have expressed that interest, will have had their views taken into consideration. Of course, account will have been taken of locus standi. In a case like this, anyone voicing an objection must say who he is, what his interest is, and how he is affected. That cannot be altered. I understand that, in the case of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), some changes were made in the original proposed route. It would appear that the requirements have changed from time to time. I think that certain minor modifications have been made.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I had no intention of intervening in the hon. Gentleman's speech, which I have been following with great interest, but I assure him that no changes were made as a result of the leaflets or of meetings in my constituency. If he thinks that some changes were made, perhaps he will tell the House what they were.

Mr. Bevan: I understood that there had been minor changes from the centre of the spine area originally proposed by the city council to the periphery—changes that the hon. Gentleman wanted. Certainly the route has now been arranged along the boundary of Collector road.

Mr. Davis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bevan: I shall give way once more, but then I must get on.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is talking about my constituency. I have to tell him that he is confusing the Bromford estate with Chelmsley Wood. Collector road is in Chelmsley Wood, not in the Bromford estate, which is in my constituency. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not intend to mislead the House, but his description of the alleged changes is misleading.

Mr. Bevan: I shall listen with interest to the hon. Gentleman's speech and perhaps return to the matter.

Let us consider the concerns expressed at the many meetings and consultation sessions. One of them was noise. The vehicles are much quieter than the 1940s tram or even the Blackpool trams, and the higher frequency will mean that they will be less intrusive. The tracks will be embedded in rubber compound and ballasted when feasible, so there will be virtually no noise, and noise insulation grant will be payable under a scheme similar to that in operation for highways.

Safety has been concentrated upon, and the tram will be a much safer form of conveyance per passenger mile than the car. There will be far fewer accidents involving pedestrians. The vehicle runs on rails and so will be more controlled than a car or bus. The driver does not have to steer and has a high level of training, and the system has been approved by the railway inspectorate under the strictest criteria.

Concern was also expressed about property values and compensation. In 1989, Centro introduced a scheme to purchase properties directly affected by the proposals whose owners wished to sell. Moreover, evidence shows that property values increase faster when new public transport infrastructure is built. In Grenoble, only about 50 per cent. of the people had been in favour of the system before it was initiated, but after it had been running for about a year, no fewer than 93·7 per cent. expressed themselves completely in favour.

A factor that is important to all of us here is funding. We shall seek funding from the private sector—through operating rights, stop locations and development gain. We shall seek it from the EEC regional development fund, on the basis of job creation, economic regeneration and environmental gain. I understand that about 30 per cent. of the funding may be available from the EEC. We shall seek funding from the United Kingdom Government, on the grounds of non-user benefits such as the relief of traffic congestion, environmental improvements and a reduction in accidents, as well as by the appropriate section 56 applications.

What will the costs be? Line 1 will cost £60 million for 20 km. The lines covered by the Bill—lines 2 and 3—will cost £224 million for 26 km and £139 million for 26 km respectively, and the vehicles will cost £30 million.

How do those costs compare with road costs? The heartlands spine road, which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and I seek to bring into existence and for which we, with some other hon. Members, have obtained approval, will cost £85 million and cover 4·1 km—a cost of £20·66 million per km—and its maximum passenger capacity will be 14,500. Line 3 of the metro will cost £139 million, or about twice as much as the heartlands spine road, but it will cover 26 km, which is more than six times the road's length. The cost per km will be £5·36 million—about a quarter of the cost of the road, and the passenger capacity will be about 30,000—twice the capacity of the spine road.

Support for the project has been pretty constant, and the groups that have given their support range from Aston Villa football club—despite yesterday's loss—and the Automobile Association, through a myriad of bodies to the Urban Wildlife Group and the west midlands branch of the CBI. There has been cross-party support from all the district councils and from most of the west midlands Members of Parliament—support which I hope will be reflected again this evening. As I explained earlier, there is widespread public support and even the groups that oppose the project because of the routes claim to support the concept and to want the metro to proceed.

What happened in Grenoble? Before the tram was built the people were 53 to 47 in favour of its going ahead. Two years after it had opened, they were 93 to 7 in favour.

This is a brilliant opportunity to take a gigantic transportation step forward to the benefit of citizens throughout the west midlands and of all the towns that are clamouring for the metro. We understand the necessity to debate and question, but we must not deny people their right to move freely on such a transport system. The Bill presents an opportunity which, if not grasped now, may be denied to us for ever. I am certain that there are no transportation luddites or even troglodytes among us, and I hope that all hon. Members will vote to give the Bill its Second Reading.

7.35 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I speak not as a troglodyte or as a luddite. Words of abuse may have been heaped upon me, but I have never been called either of those. Nor am I a Trappist.

One of the great problems that hon. Members face in dealing with constituency matters is how to make a judgment based on representations from individual constituents or groups of constituents, however legitimately expressed on the one hand, and representations from a wider group—which may or may not be formally made—on the other. One's judgment must be based partly on sectarian interests—I do not use the word "sectarian" in any way abusively—and partly on broader regional and national interests. Sometimes hon. Members may be cowed into silence—if not submission—on an issue that directly affects a group of their constituents, but we must try to take a broader approach.

Although a number of my constituents—not many—have expressed their opposition to the Bill, I am secure in the knowledge that the overwhelming majority of people are in favour of the metro being constructed through my constituency and adjacent constituencies. Without the slightest shadow of a doubt, the creation of the network will bring immense advantage to my constituents, to the town of Walsall, to the black country and to the region. As Members of Parliament, we have an obligation to represent not just specific interests but wider town and regional interests.

In my view, there is an overwhelming case for the House to endorse the Bill and to hope that it will wend its way through Committee and through a consultation process that will be a continuation of the consultations to date. I hope that eventually—not before time, as this saga has been unfolding since the early 1980s—in the mid to late 1990s, we shall see the network in operation. We must work towards that end and recognise what has already been achieved.

As far as I am aware, the authorities were not legally obliged to begin the consultation process until the Bill had completed its passage through Parliament. What was done in my area, and, I presume, in others, was therefore discretionary. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) narrated a long tale of consultation, which I could replicate with the greatest of ease. A large number of meetings and metro surgeries were held; a hot line was established; letters were written; tens of thousands of leaflets were issued, including to all those living within a kilometre of the proposed route.

Walsall council cannot be criticised for failing to consult. Nor can the council or the passenger transport authority be accused of not acting on a number of suggestions. A year ago, residents in Victoria road, Darlaston, heard that the line was to go past their houses. They told me that that proposal was illogical. I was told that the line would go down the road and that there would be enormous traffic problems because the road was too narrow. They said that, just 20 yd from the proposed line, there was an old railway cutting, and asked whether it would make more sense to put the line in the old cutting. However, the problem was that the council had spent money making that cutting into a linear pathway and it was not initially enthusiastic about ripping up something which was environmentally advantageous that it had constructed. When the case was put to Walsall council and the PTA, reason prevailed and the route was changed. It is obvious that, where a rational case could be presented, the authority has been prepared to reconsider and has changed the route.

I understand that there had been a change of route in Solihull. Perhaps there will be other changes later. However, we face problems with such proposals. People legitimately say that they do not want the proposed line to pass their houses because it might be noisy or because fishermen carrying their lines might snag them on the overhead wires. Similarly, they argue that children might be run down or that the line would have an adverse effect on house prices. Many arguments can be made with fervour and legitimacy, and perhaps some are valid.

It is quite natural that people are reluctant to have any development near their homes. At what point do legitimate criticisms and proposed alterations to a route that might be to the public advantage turn into opposition regardless of the proposal? I have heard it argued that the metro should not be located near houses, that it should be located on some derelict land a quarter of a mile or half a mile away. That argument seems to defeat the object of the metro, which is to put a network close to where people live so that they can get on and off the line and go wherever they want within the network. If the network is located away from houses, people will not use it.

Although I have some objectors to the proposal in one part of my constituency, the majority of the objectors in Walsall are within the constituency of my hon. Friend the member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). I am satisfied that the objections have been heard and a rational decision has been taken. Clearly some people will be most unhappy, but they were consulted and the local authority pursued the consultation and administrative process incumbent upon it so efficiently that, when the ombudsman, at the request of constituents, complained to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration of maladministration and lack of consultation by Walsall council—I shall not bore the House by listing the complaints—the local ombudsman concluded:

> "I am satisfied that the Council considered objections to the proposed route but concluded that on balance the original route was the best option. This is a judgment within the council's discretion."

The council was exonerated of maladministration and it has nothing to feel guilty about.

I was struck by the discretionary nature of the consultation. Councillor Dick Worrall in my constituency has been tireless in consulting people who have objections. He produced a leaflet informing objectors how to petition Parliament. In some ways, it is rather bizarre to offer weapons to one's opponents. However, such was the great desire of Councillor Worrall, who is a member of the passenger transport executive, to make the opportunities for protesting well known, that the information was made available in leaflets that were distributed widely. To those who sometimes argue that the consultative process was a farce and that no genuine attempt was made to listen to the objections, I respond with some authority from experience of my area, and dismiss those criticisms.

I am sure that many hon. Members want to speak tonight, and some of them will give good reasons why the metro routes should not be laid down. However, hon. Members from the west midlands must be aware that our transport network is in deep crisis. That is obvious simply from looking at our streets and roads.

I want to be not politically partisan but descriptively correct and to argue that our highways are clogged and the situation is unlikely to improve. In fact, if car ownership increases at projected levels, in a decade or so our highways will be impassable.

[Mr. Bruce George]

I congratulate the West Midlands passenger transport executive on its imagination with this proposal. It has not pioneered such an idea, and the concept is not unique in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. However, the executive has faced the difficulties. It has devised routes and gone to an enormous amount of trouble in hiring consultants and holding meetings. The process is now moving towards a critical stage.

It is obvious to everyone why the network is necessary. It is required urgently because it will assist those who are not mobile to become mobile. I have seen statistics which show that the majority of the metro's critics in some areas are car owners. While it is important to encourage car owners to get on the new trams, some people would argue that it is more important to bring mobility to those who do not have it now.

There are also arguments in favour of the metro in terms of environmental improvements and savings in fuel. It is argued that it will bring together towns in the west midlands and the black country that are now not closely linked, especially east to west. Most importantly, the metro will help to regenerate our region.

The proposal will be costly, and we hope that money will come from central Government, local government, the European Community and private sources. The proposal is not the easy option. However, I urge hon. Members who are present in the Chamber now and others who have not yet heard the arguments to support the Bill today.

The proposal is necessary. We must bear in mind the objectors and, even if we are victorious tonight, we must be magnanimous in victory and recognise that we must as far as possible meet legitimate objections. However, those objections must not be elevated to such a level that the public interest will be damaged by routes being vetoed. We must listen to objectors, take account of what is said, and determine whether it is possible to re-route or to compensate adequately. Everything must be done to maximise support. Perhaps, in five or six years, some parts of the region will have a rapid transit system of which we can be proud, and we shall look back to this Second Reading debate and say that we supported it.

7.49 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate the Government's attitude. I am aware that my speech may sound rather dispassionate compared with the two heartfelt speeches that hon. Members have already heard. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) for the comprehensive way in which he moved the Second Reading.

This is one of several private Bills—I need hardly tell the House that—providing for new light railways or rapid transit systems in and around our major cities. Light rail has many potential advantages—for example, where vehicles run on their own tracks, they can move more people more quickly than buses can. They can also run on-street and negotiate steeper gradients and tighter bends than conventional railways.

The Government welcome the efforts that transport planners are making to assess what light rail has to offer. Naturally, it cannot be the ideal solution in all cases, but it can bring considerable benefits, as it has done in the case of docklands light railway. Only a few months ago, we were delighted to give the go-ahead to the Manchester MetroLink light rail project, and we have also provided some funding for the development of the south Yorkshire project planned for Sheffield.

Parliament has already negotiated for line 1 of the proposed midland metro network. I understand that the West Midlands passenger transport executive, now known as Centro, intends to apply for grant towards the cost of providing that line. When it does so, we shall look at the case on its merits and in the light of resources available. I cannot forecast the outcome of that tonight, not least because we do not yet have the submission.

Now Centro is seeking powers for two more lines towards an extensive light rail network. It hopes to reduce existing and future traffic congestion and foster the expansion of employment and development opportunities. I understand that, in doing so, it intends to take full advantage of the skills that the private sector has to offer in designing, building and operating the system. I welcome that.

In principle, the Bill is acceptable to the Government, but we have raised with the promoters a number of technical and drafting points that I hope will be resolved satisfactorily. The works proposed in the Bill also affect a listed building in the area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is concerned about paragraph 7 of schedule 1 to the Bill, which disapplies the special controls that normally apply to listed buildings. That issue has been raised with the promoter, and he wishes to reserve his position for the time being.

There are 35 petitions against the Bill, and, if they are pursued, there will be the opportunity to present objections to the Select Committee. The Committee will be in a very much better position than we are tonight to examine in detail the issues involved, and it will have the added advantage of hearing expert evidence.

Mr. Rooker: It is a bit unfair to ask the Minister this question, but he is the only Minister present. Will every hon. Member from the west midlands be excluded, or will hon. Members through whose constituencies the lines will go be on the Committee? Frankly, that is what is wrong with private legislation. Hon. Members from the west midlands have experience of the area and could contribute to the Select Committee's proceedings. Membership of that Committee is important for a proper discussion of the Bill. How will exclusion be drawn? Will it be based on the whole of the west midlands region or county, or will it be based on Members through whose constituencies the lines will go?

Mr. Portillo: I was not overly flattered when the hon. Gentleman said that I was the only Minister around and suggested that I would do for the purpose. He does not want a Minister to answer his question. It is not within the gift of Ministers to determine which hon. Members will serve on Select Committees. I imagine that it must be for some Committee of the House, but it certainly is not for me. I cannot predict how a Committee might interpret its role. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and it is clearly on the record for the relevant authorities to consider.

I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading to allow it to proceed in the usual way to Committee for detailed consideration.

7.54 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Like the Minister, my brief is to express a few words of welcome for the Bill. It is the Labour party's policy to support such developments. However, I am bound to say that the Government's attitude to some parts of the country has been somewhat worrying. The Minister mentioned the docklands light railway and Manchester. Although Opposition Members are pleased with the success of those developments, we are aware that, in the case of the docklands light railway, the Government are anxious to commit some public funds—as with the extension of the Jubilee line—to prove that their private enterprise flagship can stay afloat, albeit by pumping some additional public funds into the hull.

The Government have announced their approval of a private-public sector partnership in Manchester. Given the Minister's detailed scrutiny of such matters, it will not have escaped his attention that the lines proposed for conversion into a metro system in Manchester are existing heavy railway lines that have been used to such an extent that both lines were electrified by the London Midland and Scottish railway about 50 or 60 years ago.

Opposition Members note that, in giving the go-ahead and steering Manchester towards the conversion of those existing heavy railway lines, the Government are aware that there will be many passengers to move along that corridor. I make no complaint about that. However, if I were a season ticket holder at Altrincham or Bury, to name but two, I doubt whether I would be looking forward with any great relish to the replacement of my fast, frequent and comfortable electric service by a metro system which, in the rush hour at least, is likely to be far more crowded than the existing conventional trains that it replaces.

The Minister looks somewhat doubtful. He must not think that we are gullible enough to believe that public money is necessarily steered towards such projects because of the amount of public good that such money will provide. That is not the Government's way. They will guarantee the success of the Manchester metro and its private sector involvement in exactly the same way as they guaranteed the success of the docklands light railway—that is, by cramming as many passengers as possible into vehicles that are likely to give a less comfortable journey.

If any declaration of interest is necessary, I have a mild interest to declare. Although the Minister was careful not to commit any Government money in this case, the proposed railway line runs through my constituency. Indeed, it joins Wolverhampton with Birmingham, via West Bromwich—a fact that will no doubt please my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner). We would have been grateful if, together with the Minister's good wishes, we had the promise of funds. Of course we do not have the advantage of converting a conventional railway, although the line will run along the track bed of the former Great Western railway main line and will connect with a reopened stretch of that line, if Centro's plans for conventional rail go ahead as we hope.

There is some opposition to the Bill. Like other west midlands Members, I have received representations from those who oppose the Bill. I apologise for missing part of the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan). It was not sour grapes because he made such a fool of himself on television in the west midlands a few weeks ago; it was because I had been ensconced on this Bench since 3.30 pm.

For once, we agree on the project. The Labour party supports the Bill. Representations have been made to all hon. Members by those whom my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) said were primarily car owners. I do not know whether they are primarily car owners, but I am convinced of the relevance of some of their objections. However, to deny objectors the right to put a case before a Committee of the House is scarcely good public relations.

I am aware of the recommendations of the Select Committee, behind which Centro seeks to shield itself from criticism. It has nothing to fear from criticism, and I wish that it had not taken the action that it took.

My second criticism of the way in which the matter has been handled is that Centro occasionally appeared to be more interested in paying money to public relations firms than in speaking directly to Opposition and Conservative Members who have not only a direct interest in the future of the metro system but knowledge of parliamentary procedures which we would gladly pass on without demanding the enormous fees which no doubt were paid to public relations firms.

I object to receiving letters from a public relations firm asking me to meet members of my own political party who serve on local authorities in the west midlands. I do not see either the point or the relevance of such letters. On numerous occasions I have sought to impress that fact on those who are responsible for paying the bills to such companies, apparently without success.

Mr. Rooker: It is worse than my hon. Friend says. During one part of the public relations exercise on the Bill, on behalf of the public relations firms, I received from its employee, a Member of Parliament representing a Surrey constituency, an invitation to talk to my passenger transport authority. When people send me letters to try to get my ear in that way, I tear them up. When residents write to me, I do what other hon. Members do and go to see them. I went to see people in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) in Bromford. When a company tries to reach me via another Member of Parliament from a constituency deep in the Surrey woodlands, it seems that someone is not earning his salary.

Mr. Snape: Regrettably, what we are complaining about is that someone is earning his salary, albeit at the expense of those whom we represent. Letters from the source that my hon. Friend referred to are an extremely clumsy way, to say the least, of going about the matter.

I make no complaint about the chairman and founder of the public relations company being a prominent member of the Conservative party, but when such an organisation sends me letters, it does not endear the cause to me. I see no reason for Centro to handle the matter in that way.

I have no doubt that, should they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of my hon. Friends will state the objections to the Bill of people in the area. Any hon. Member has every right to raise objections on behalf of those whom he represents. In this case, the objectors are misguided in the long term. As the hon. Member for Yardley said, if the projections are right, traffic congestion

[Mr. Snape]

in and around the west midlands conurbation by the end of the decade is likely to mean that none of us will travel anywhere by motor car. By objecting to and perhaps delaying, if not preventing, the line, objectors might prevent themselves from moving around the conurbation and prevent other people from doing so in years to come.

I have some sympathy with those who feel that there is something to fear from noise and so on, but, having seen metro schemes in operation in other parts of the world, I believe that their fears are misplaced. I repeat that they should have been allowed at least to put those fears to the appropriate Committee of the House without being challenged.

With those twin caveats in mind—the clumsy and unnecessary opposition of petitioners and the even more clumsy and less necessary use of a fairly hostile public relations organisation—I repeat that the official Opposition support schemes such as this, and I shall vote for it tonight.

8.6 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meridan): It is always difficult to make change in complex societies. One wants to make change for the better. There is no doubt in my mind that the midland metro is a change for the better in the west midlands. I hope that both Conservative and Opposition Members will remember that I represent a constituency that lies between Birmingham and Coventry. We have seen change for the better in the shape of the national exhibition centre, Birmingham international station, Birmingham international airport, Birmingham business park and many other developments. That has created a huge complex of industrial activity, which I strongly welcome and which the vast majority of my constituency have come to welcome. It is part of the most important regeneration of our area.

Centro—formerly the pasenger transport executive—has come along with what seems to be a good proposal. The principle is good. The majority of my constituents believe that the principle of better communications between Birmingham and the NEC, servicing on the way the constituencies of Opposition Members and mine, is good. The line will have a major effect on my constituency. Therefore, it would be wrong not to raise some of the objections that have been made to me by my constituents.

I am not one of the luddites or troglodytes of which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) spoke so eloquently. But it seems to me that the authorities involved have been either naive or bound by the chains of bureaucracy in their approach. The consultation was brief and was carried out badly in the initial stages. However, I pay tribute to some of the officials of Centro, who did their best, when I drew their attention to some of the problems, to meet my constituents.

In the initial stages, I was overwhelmed with people who came to my advice bureau. On one occasion, 200 people turned up out of the blue at my advice bureau in Castle Bromwich. They had not received their leaflets, because the leaflets had been dumped by the young children who were supposed to have delivered them. Perhaps that is one of the difficulties of public communications. I began by saying that we are in a complex society. It is terribly important to involve people whose lives will be affected by changes, especially as we are a democracy.

In the early stages of processing what is now the Bill, but was then a proposal, many people felt—and they still feel—totally disadvantaged by the fact that they had not been adequately consulted, although their lives were being affected. It is they who may not be able to park their motor cars and who will have to have a terrible tram—although, of course, it might be a light, super-quiet and benign vehicle—running near them. The whole process of consultation in the early stages was a disaster. I can say that because all the people concerned came to see me. I have with me just part of my key bundle on this. There is more, but I could not carry it all over here, even with the Minister's chauffeur-driven car and the 12 red boxes. Very many people have been to see me and have written to me about this.

The consultation was inadequate in the early stages of the proposals, but I am now concerned that it is complicated by a serious denial of democracy, which will make me oppose the Bill unless I receive a serious reassurance from the promoters. The serious denial of democracy is that the residents' groups, which number five and of which three are in my constituency, and the 35 petitioners who wish to petition against the Bill in the Opposed Private Bill Committee, are being denied that oppor-tunity by Centro, which has challenged their objections.

I understand that the objections have been challenged on two grounds. The first is that locus standi cannot be granted unless the line of deviation affects a particular property. Does that mean that, if the wing of an aeroplane comes within 2 in of a person's hedge, that person cannot be given the right to put his or her case to the four hon. Members who serve on that Committee? Although I understand the technicality, I find it bewildering that my three groups may not be able to make their petition. I understand that other hon. Members have heard from other groups.

I quote from Centro's response:

"our action in challenging the locus standi of your group is in accord with the recommendation of the Joint Select Committee of Members of Parliament on private Bill procedure which said that 'promoters should be encouraged to police the rules of locus standi'".

That may well be correct in technical terms, but how can my constituents make their views known if I do not speak tonight and if they cannot petition the Court of Referees, which I understand meets on Thursday of this week, and which is chaired by the Chairman of Ways and Means, who is to consider the objections? I have written to the chief executive of Centro, asking him to consider withdrawing the technicalities so that the process of democracy can work.

There is some passion in my voice tonight because, whatever the rights and wrongs of the metro, the mere fact that the line of deviation is 12 in or even 12 ft from the homes of those affected should not deny them the right of making their representations.

Having served on a Committee considering a similar Bill relating, strangely enough, to Liverpool and Merseyside, I understand how the procedures work. My good people have briefed counsel, taken a great deal of trouble and done a lot of work to prepare their petitions,

which I have with me. If those petitions are not heard by the hon. Members who will make the judgment, that is a gross denial of democratic procedures.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the midland metro, we should be making a grave mistake if we allowed that to happen. A simple withdrawal of the objections by Centro would allow those people to put their petitions. Although the locus standi argument of the director general may be technically correct, it is not in the spirit of true democracy. Therefore, although I do not want to detain the House for too long, those are the reasons why I am speaking.

The other point that has been made about the denial of locus standi is that those groups are not truly representative of the people affected. I understand that about 90 per cent. of the residents concerned are paid-up members of one of those small groups. As the local Member of Parliament, I have experienced 200 people arriving at my advice bureau when I was expecting only 15 or 20 in that area—*[Interruption.]* Well, perhaps the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has only about two—they know how helpful he is—but I get more than that. The fact that I had 200 people at my advice bureau shows the strength of people's feelings. Somebody had to organise that. In at least one place—in Smith's Wood—the parish council, which is established by statute, supports the objectors.

I do not accept the argument about the line of deviation being only a few feet or metres from a person's residence. I do not accept the technical argument, that the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure has recommended that these technical matters should be considered by the promoters. I do not accept the argument that the groups involved are not representative of the individuals affected.

Anyway, what is representation? Presumably it should be by statute, by the parish, town or borough council. However, that is to deny another element of democracy. I am talking about residents' groups, representing the most reasonable people I have come across. At my meeting this weekend, one of them, who might be seen by the promoters as their leading campaigner, said, "I cannot wait to get the metro. I cannot wait to get a better transport system, provided that it is on the right route." That is the whole genesis of my speech.

Before I refer to details about routing—I promise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall not detain the House for longer than I have to—I am concerned that, as part of its process of consultation, Centro commissioned a firm called Terraquest to discuss their properties with those concerned. That was done so badly that people came to my advice bureau fully believing that compulsory purchase orders would be applied to their land.

I am most grateful and pay tribute to Centro for giving me the right information so soon and for telling me that that was not the case. However, by then the damage had been done. The surveys had been carried out and people were absolutely terrified. Surely there must be a better way. Was it a question of timing? Did Centro try too hard, too soon? I know that the survey had to be carried out because of the Bill and that Centro had to know about the properties involved and whether they were freehold, but people were given the strong impression that they would lose hedges, land or even their houses. Centro's methods seem strange.

It is wrong that the House should consider giving the Bill a Second Reading before the consultation has covered key aspects of the routing of the midland metro, such as its stops or stations. Those matters have still not been decided. As I have said, I am opposed to giving the Bill a Second Reading unless I am given good reasons for agreeing to it. We do not know where the stops will be, because the consultation period is yet to come. That is a matter of major importance to my constituents. Of course, the stops may well be beautiful. I am sorry that I was unable to go to Grenoble. I should have liked to go, but could not, for no other reason than pressure of time. Perhaps the midland metro will sigh benignly to a halt and there will be no parking or other problems, but to proceed with the Second Reading of a Bill that gives draconian powers to Centro before those matters have been resolved is a serious matter.

As I said, whatever the rights and wrongs, there is still great concern in my constituency about house values. That has been expressed by local estate agents and chartered surveyors. I do not know whether it is temporary or will apply in the longer term, but house values have been depressed. One of my constituents has been trying to sell his not very big four-bedroomed house. It is at the top end of Chelmsley Wood, going towards Marston Green, and is on the route of the metro. He has been advised that that property, which he could normally have expected to sell for about £65,000, is now valued at £47,500.

It is classic that the houses on the route appear to be devalued and that houses that are occupied by those who will not be affected by the route and who will have the advantage, which I applaud, of travelling into Birmingham more easily, will not be devalued. As I said, one of my constituents has told me that he cannot wait for the construction of the metro, as it will make his life much easier, provided that it runs on the right routee. Those who live on the route deserve better consultation and greater consideration.

Is the national exhibition centre one of the 35 petitioners? Has it petitioned against part of the route? Have the Birmingham business park and other business interests petitioned against parts of the routeing? If those interests are allowed to petition and constituent groups are not, that is an unhappy situation.

Mr. Rooker: There is no doubt that the private Bill procedure is in a mess. That is why a Select Committee report has been produced. Attempts to stop individuals petitioning against private Bills are bound to throw the system into a worse mess. It is likely that the House will take a dim view at a later stage in the consideration of the Bill if individuals are prevented from exercising their democratic rights before the Committee. That will be especially evident if the business park is allowed to petition, subject to the Minister's answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. The business park is under construction and I have visited the site with one or two of my hon. Friends. If the park were allowed to petition and residents were not, I do not think that the House would allow the Bill to proceed.

Mr. Mills: It is strange that I find myself in agreement with the hon. Gentleman. We often disagree across the Floor of the House. On this occasion, however, he is right.

I have been given information, and I ask whoever is responsible to make the position clear on behalf of the promoters. Will the NEC, the business park or any other industrial interest be allowed to petition? Has any such

[Mr. Mills]

interest not been challenged and not referred to the Court of Reference? Will such an interest be able to brief a barrister to express its point of view on changes of route?

With one or two exceptions, all those who have sent me documents are in favour of the metro. They are against the route, or aspects of it, but they are in favour of the metro. They are not awkward or extremely difficult people in the sense that they are saying, "Put the metro in Surrey and we shall not worry about it." Instead, they are asking for specific changes and they have petitioned for those changes. It will be extremely unsatisfactory if their petitions are not heard.

There are three organised groups in my constituency and they are representative. Their petitions have been properly drawn up and they have been properly advised. They were prepared to present themselves as reasonble groups of people. When I spoke to them, they were quiet. Perhaps they were more softly voiced than I have been this evening, especially when I allowed some passion and unhappiness to be demonstrated by my voice. Many strident voices have been heard at many public meetings, but the groups to which I refer are representative. They have distilled logical options from the strident arguments.

I believe that we can gain support from those who are affected by the metro if we produce reasoned alternatives. Are the promoters chained in bureaucracy? Are they unable to change the route because of the relationship with the local authority and others? Are they unable to go back and start again because of the complexities? I ask them to think again. I cannot support them even if the chains of bureaucracy are their problem.

One of the three groups represents the majority of the residents of Auckland drive, with is a long road running alongside Collector road. Some of my colleagues may not know that charming part of Birmingham. It is near Fort Dunlop, where I spent 20 years. Therefore, Collector road is like my back yard. It has for years been extremely under-used, to say the least. It is a very quiet road. I use it many times a week. When I hold my advice bureaus, I travel to and fro on it.

My constituents who live in the area say that the decision to position the route of the metro on the embankment is one to which they object strongly. They submit that the plan should be amended to provide for the construction of a route along the carriageway of Collector road. It is a road almost of motorway standard. It is almost as good as the M42 running north from Dunton Island towards Leicestershire. It is an ill-used road. It has been used for car parking during the motor shows at the NEC. So little is it used that there may be technical problems, but if we are to make progress, we must resolve them.

Mr. Bevan: The route was designed by the local council. It is only a few metres from the preferred route of one of the pressure groups, the ADAM group. That is the group that represents the Auckland drive residents. Solihull council has been emphatic that it does not want to disrupt a major highway. It is especially important that the metro operates on reserved tracks. My hon. Friend should address his remarks to Solihull council.

My hon. Friend knows that extra value has been attributed to the properties that are along the route, not negative value. He claims that the locus standi is not democratic. A petition against a private Bill can be held only if it has locus standi. The Select Committee has been especially vociferous in emphasising that the rules must be observed.

Mr. Mills: I referred briefly to locus standi, and I am not being facetious when I say that I am standing to put as many points as I can to the House. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, it is ridiculous that those who are intimately concerned but whose locus standi is dismissed because of the rules are unable to present their views.

However delightful and however charming the vehicle is that passes within a few metres of the dwellings of those who are in that position, does my hon. Friend say that they should have no means of expressing their feelings? Surely they should be able to submit their views to Parliament. The private Bill procedure is arcane. As others have said, it is probably wrong. If we in Parliament have to decide, how can we be petitioned?

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Residents are unable to object for reasons other than locus standi. They are unable to do so even if their properties are adjacent to the route of the metro, not adjoining it or in the way of it. The definition of those who are unable to petition is not as narrow as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Mills: I am grateful for that advice. If the three groups that I understand are going to the Court of Referees on Thursday morning are granted the ability to approach the Committee, that will be helpful. I have served on such Committees and I am more than happy to listen to those who have an interest, and these people have an interest. For example, in Helmswood drive, the midland metro will run within a metre of their hedge. If locus standi does not permit such people the opportunity to make their points, perhaps I can make some of them for them.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley, that the working group included Solihull council. However, apart from protesting at various meetings, how can my constituents press for changes in the route? Are they to have no further opportunity, as they would do at a public inquiry, where one can ask the Minister to make a reasoned judgment or to make a judgment on the basis of certain facts? Are they just to be told that it is finished and that they will have no further opportunities to make their point heard?

The embankment at Auckland drive is important. Any hon. Member who has travelled from Birmingham to Coventry, not on the motorway but on the side roads from Stonebridge, up the Chester road and down the Collector road towards my old place of employment, Fort Dunlop, will have seen what the embankment means. It was constructed as a wind and sound barrier for the residents against both the motorway and the Collector road. It has a considerable amount of wildlife. One does not expect Solihull council, much loved by me and by those in Chelmsley road, to make claims like this.

There is also the amenity value for the residents, which the presence of the metro on some or all of the embankment would substantially reduce. Proximity of the metro would also have an effect. Having had the advice of experts on this subject, I know that, while the metro may not have a detrimental effect on the capital value of the houses of the majority of those living in Chelmsley road, it would certainly affect those living right by it.

Mr. Bevan: I can quickly answer that point made about possible erosion of the embankment and harm to wildlife, and I hope to my hon. Friend's satisfaction. There will be little erosion. A retaining wall will be used where necessary to keep the embankment height, and further planting will take place.

Mr. Mills: I thank my hon. Friend. I was going to press him later on landscaping and further planting. He has a good point, because it may be possible to do that on this embankment. I do not accept the arguments of either Solihull council or Centro about siting the metro on part of the embankment when it could just as easily, more acceptably, and without any effect on the wildlife, be positioned on one side of the Collector road.

As a result of lines 50 to 52 of schedule 3, the

"Footpath between subway under Collector Road and Auckland Drive at junction with Nightingale Avenue"

will be extinguished. My constituents are most concerned about that and would like the problem resolved. The footpath is used by adults and children and it would be dangerous if it crossed the metro track.

I am aware that I am taking up an unfair share of the time, but this matter is important. I press my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley, or the promoters who might care to reply elsewhere, or even my hon. Friend the Minister who may be able to advise me, about compensation. Little has been said about that. Those who will be adversely affected directly—that is, if the metro line runs across their property—will be compensated under present legislation. Those who feel that they will be adversely affected indirectly, in the sense that the wing-tip of the aeroplane is within 1 ft—that is, if the metro runs within a short distance of their land—do not know. What provision will there be? How is it proposed to consider compensation? What happens and how does it work? What rights do they have?

Is there any provision in the Bill to require the executive to construct safety fences and noise barriers between the metro and houses occupied by my constituents? It may be that the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley about the wall on the embankment at Auckland drive has answered that question.

The next part of my constituency to be affected is Bacons End—a charming part of the world, to be recommended to any of my colleagues who wish to come to see a good community. All my constituents there are concerned about their embankment, which is further down, beyond what is known as the Coles hill roundabout. Going up Collector road, leaving behind Fort Dunlop, one passes the Coles hill roundabout and comes to the next roundabout. There is a charming group of dwellings at Bacons End, at Clopton crescent. Again, there is wildlife on the embankment and amenities for the residents. They have said to me:

"It has become a natural habitat for a variety of animals within an otherwise urban area and is used for dog walking, bike riding, exercising children, flying kites and is visually attractive."

On the many occasions that I have passed it, I have seen young people, parents and dogs on it. The presence of the metro would remove the opportunity for such exercise, and substantially reduce the amenity value.

My constituents are most concerned about the value of their homes. In their petition, which they may or may not, due to locus standi, be allowed to have heard, they say that they understand that there is no provision in the Bill for there to be adequate fencing. They have pointed out to me that one of the purposes of the metro is to persuade people to take public transport as an alternative to private motor cars. Consequently, there is likely to be a drop in the usage of the road in the route along the metro. Therefore, why not position it on the carriageway of the road? As my constituent said, "I can't wait to use the metro." Once people leap on the metro and leave their cars at home, there will not be the traffic problem that we do not have on the Collector road anyway.

For both the Auckland drive and the Bacons End parts of the road, it is important to consider the routeing. The plans as presently lodged permit Centro to construct the metro on any part of the grass embankment as the whole area is within the line of deviation, within the permitted variations. Why cannot that be more limited? How can my constituents feel any confidence in the consultation process when there are no limits, and they do not know exactly where it will be?

Schedule 4 shows the proposed route, including a tunnel that emerges between Collector road and Chester road, which is used by many local children as a play area. That would be impractical if the metro were positioned on that route. If the alternatives to Collector road were considered, that problem would be resolved.

There is more concern about consultation, but I must come to my third subject, which is the alternative. If any right hon. or hon. Member wishes to see it, I have here a map showing that the route leaves the island, cuts down through Berwick's lane and Helmswood drive and then comes back up again and cuts round the national exhibition centre. There is much enthusiasm in the area for the metro, provided that it goes straight along the dual carriageway known as the Chester road. That alternative has been suggested, pressed for and fought for by my constituents all along.

I was in my constituency on Saturday, and I am there most Saturdays. Let us visualise how close the metro will be, particularly to Helmswood drive. We must ask where people will park their cars. What provision has been made for that? There is no point in talking about landscaping there, because there is no room for it. The metro will be almost as close as my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley is to me in the Chamber.

Mr. Bevan: I am glad that my hon. Friend mentioned Helmswood drive and on-street parking. Bays will be provided all along the street in that area, after consultation with residents. Therefore, his point is accepted.

As for the pedestrian subways that will be closed on Moorend avenue and Helmswood drive, I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will be pleased about that, because local residents have already campaigned for it.

My hon. Friend said that the route goes too close to houses on Helmswood drive and Berwick's lane, but that route was approved by Solihull council. It is important for the route to go close to the population; otherwise there is little point in having a metro. Line 2 was designed so that no residential properties would be demolished and no gardens would be taken up, and I am advised that very few properties are less than 30 m from the track. In Grenoble, the vehicles go within a few metres of dwellings and shops in the city centre and there are no objections whatever.

Mr. Mills: I thank my hon. Friend for his usual gracious way of blaming Solihull council for not objecting

[Mr. Mills]

to the scheme. The local residents' group and residents in Moorend avenue, Berwick's lane, Helmswood drive, Chelmsley road and Coleshill Heath road believe that the present route will be severely detrimental to residents in the area. I accept that there are parking problems now, but those are, by and large, resolvable. Other anxieties have been expressed to me. One charming lady who recently lost her husband asked whether a hearse would be able to gain access, and there is also the question of ambulances and fire engines. Perhaps my hon. Friend can reassure me about that.

The whole point of the residents' argument is that the layout of the area is predominantly residential. It is owner-occupied and tenanted, and is not a rich area but mixed. The people there work in Birmingham and would welcome access to Birmingham by the metro. It is the proximity of the proposed route to homes in the area that is the problem. Therefore, they have proposed an alternative, and if they could petition the Committee about that, I should be most grateful.

The houses in the area were originally built on green belt land and it is a pleasant environment in which to live. The introduction of the metro through the area would fundamentally affect its nature. The grass verges, trees and shrubbery are not good now, but they would be non-existent, and there is no possibility of landscaping, in view of the layout of the area—I do not see how it can be done.

My hon. Friend said that there would be consultations about parking, but how can I agree to a Second Reading of a Bill that gives Centro the power to introduce the metro without my constituents having the opportunity to discuss where the parking bays will be?

Mr. Bevan: The bays will be provided after consultation with local residents.

Mr. Mills: I accept that from my hon. Friend, but surely, before we proceed and give Centro the power to introduce the metro, we should have resolved the problems of stops, stays, stations, lines, parking and landscaping. It should all be laid out, so that people can say, "Here it is and we shall tell our Member of Parliament that we accept it."

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Mr. Mills: The hon. Gentleman is sniggering, but as a rail man I suppose that he is not too worried about parking.

Mr. Snape: I was not sniggering. I was somewhat surprised at what the hon. Gentleman was saying. Is he seriously asking the House to believe that every dot and comma should be drawn up before we agree to the scheme, or that parking and the whole line of the route should be arranged? If that was the case, would not he and his constituents shout that it was fixed, because everything had been done beforehand? One cannot draw up a scheme with every dot and comma and also claim that there should be consultation afterwards.

Mr. Mills: Life is difficult.

Mr. Snape: So was my question.

Mr. Mills: No, I am coming to that. In most instances, when a complex change affects people's lives, such as a planning decision, they know what is going to happen. For example, they know that 20 houses will be built and they can object or not object, or they know that there will be a change of use of a house to a shop or a garage, and they know the details.

We are talking about stops, stays, and barriers, of the imposition of double yellow lines along a stretch of Helmswood drive and of parking.

I know that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is a modest man. He probably has a small house and does not have parking provided, so he parks in front of the house in the street. If he were told that the parking bay was going to be 20 yd up the road, he would probably feel a bit fractious himself, and he might wish to have some of the i's dotted and t's crossed before procedures went ahead.

Mr. Snape: I do not mind being insulted by the hon. Gentleman at any time, but I should be glad if he withdrew the description "modest".

Mr. Mills: Of course. I fully understand—the hon. Gentleman lives in Chateau Snape, in some suitable part of his constituency.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I feel that my hon. Friend should know that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is one of my constituents.

Mr. Mills: In which case, the hon. Gentleman's credentials could not be higher.

My final technical point about Moor end avenue is that it will be reduced from a dual carriageway to a single carriageway.

There will be health problems and loss of privacy, which will affect constituents' lives, and they should be balanced against the economic regeneration. If we could find a solution to those problems and make relatively minor changes to the route in two cases, and a major change of route in the case of Chester road, the proposition would be welcomed. It would serve the NEC and my constituents and it would be popular with them, popular with me, much loved and much cherished.

8.47 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I think that all hon. Members would agree with the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) that life is difficult. I wish to apologise to the House for having a sore throat.

I have no quarrel with the way in which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) presented the case today. I disagree with some aspects of it and I shall refer briefly to the reasons why, but he promoted the Bill in a moderate and reasoned speech, and it is helpful to the House that it was done in such a way.

I support the metro scheme, as I have stated from the start. In my view, all the arguments and reasons given by the hon. Member for Yardley and other hon. Members this evening for the scheme and for extra forms of public transport in the black country and the west midlands are perfectly valid.

Some object to the Bill on the grounds that further public transport is not needed, but that is certainly not my view. It is important to point out that a substantial number

of people in the west midlands—certainly in my constituency—rely on public transport. We should get rid of the notion that everyone or nearly everyone either owns a car or has access to a motor vehicle, as that is certainly not the case.

I must also declare an interest—although not a commercial one—as we are rightly so sensitive about declaring interests these days. I am a regular user of the public transport in my area. I need to use public transport at every opportunity. Since the Government changed the regulations a few years ago, it is not pleasant, particularly on a cold windy evening, to have to wait as I have waited—and, more important, as my constituents have to wait—quite a while before the bus arrives. I do not blame the transport authority: we on this side anticipated the problem, and warned people at the time.

I am not too happy about the way in which the transport authority dealt with two of my constituents. Following some negotiation over their property, they concluded that their right to express their objection to the metro was being taken away. As soon as I learned about the matter, I wrote to the authority. The director general replied:

"Naturally, one aspect of reaching an agreement with such property owners, is for them to undertake not to object to the proposal whilst we, for our part, undertake to do or not do whatever it is that we have agreed through the negotiations. Clearly, if this was not so, there would be no basis for any agreement between us."

It is nonsense to put a couple in a small house on the same level as the transport authority. Of course people will take measures to protect their houses; why should they not do so?

I was not pleased with the director general's reply. I am a democrat—although some hon. Members may question that from time to time—and I believe that people have a basic right to put their point of view at every opportunity. I therefore wrote back to the transport authority expressing my concern. The reply—dated 1 March; my letter was sent on 15 February—states:

"we had no intention of infringing their rights as citizens to engage in free speech or other activity."

Of course I am pleased about that. The letter goes on to say that the authority would not regard the couple

"as being in breach of the undertaking by attending meetings opposed to Metro or expressing views"

hostile to it. I am pleased about that as well, but the letter continues:

"However"—

for there is a "however"—

"as you will I am sure appreciate, a different view would be taken if a formal Petition against the Bill was deposited by them.

I hope that this clarifies the matter."

If the transport authority wants to take public opinion with it, such a restriction, however it is argued, is unacceptable—not only to me as the local Member of Parliament, but I hope, to the House of Commons and to individual Members on both sides of it.

Mr. Bevan: The object of the letter of 1 March—of which I have a copy—was to emphasise the democratic rights of the hon. Gentleman's constituents. As I said at the outset, however, the constitutional processes applying to private Bills are spelt out very strictly: that is the reason for the differentiation concerning the petition.

Mr. Winnick: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I praised him earlier, and I do not want to fall out with him now, but I do not accept the need to place any restriction on my constituents, and I imagine that the House as a whole agrees with me.

A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak. I was pleased to give way to the hon. Member for Yardley—who, I am sure, has a list of matters that he wishes to raise—to refute the points I am making. I do not criticise him, for he has a job to do and he is doing it competently, but it would serve no useful purpose for me to give way to him every time I criticise aspects of the proposed route. Moreover, I shall deal with some of the issues at the end of my speech, as the hon. Member for Meriden did.

The proposed metro route through parts of Willenhall, which is in my constituency, has prompted harsh criticism from residents who consider that they will be adversely affected. The hon. Member for Yardley rightly said that we were a Parliament, and explained the origins of the word "Parliament". The fact that I happen to be in favour of the Bill, like my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), does not alter my belief that one of the purposes of the House of Commons—long may it remain so—is to allow people who feel strongly to ensure that their view is expressed in the Chamber or in Committee, even if it is wrong or misguided. Although the hon. Gentleman's speech took up more time than I intend mine to take, I have no criticism of that aspect, or of the way in which he outlined his constituents' objections to the Bill.

Some of my constituents oppose the Bill for wider reasons than worry about their properties. They are not exactly delighted, however, at the thought of passengers being able to look through the windows—perhaps even upstairs windows—of their houses, which may be overlooked by the metro, and their anxieties have been expressed repeatedly in both meetings and correspondence. I do not think that we should dismiss such genuine concern out of hand, even if the promoters consider it misguided.

There are, however, broader environmental worries. I remind hon. Members, if they need to be reminded, that my borough is urban and built up, although there are some delightful green open spaces only about some two miles away. The proposed metro route would destroy the grassy areas and places of safety for young children around Stroud avenue in Willenhall, and would also do away with the existing walkways. An old railway line now serves as a pleasant public footpath, and no doubt that would go as well.

Concern has repeatedly been expressed about the memorial park in Willenhall, which is its only park and originates from Willenhall's wish after the first world war to commemorate those who died by providing open space within a park. The proposed route would take up part of the park. It is only a small part, I accept, but it should be remembered theat the old railway line has been part of the memorial park for a very long time.

It was put to me—I wrote accordingly to the transport authority—that the metro could go underground through parts of Willenhall. I realise that there may be technical problems, but the reply that I received did not deal with those to any great extent, although it made some reference to possible dangers. It should be said that the route will go underground through parts of Birmingham, and if there are no dangers to Birmingham, there should presumably be none for Willenhall. The reply stated that an

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underground route through Willenhall would significantly increase costs and make the prospect less viable, but I am not altogether impressed by that argument: I should have thought that more valid reasons should be given if there are real objections by the authority.

I promised my constituents that I would raise their objections on the Floor of the House. As I said, I am in favour of the metro. Anything that can be done to improve transport in the west midlands is to be welcomed. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred to an integrated transport system. No Opposition Members would object to such a system for the west midlands. However, according to their statement—which I saw only today, although it was possibly issued last week, but I make no criticism of that—

"The Promoters respectfully request that the Bill should be given a Second Reading so that they should be allowed to put forward to the Committee"

all the reasons why the Bill should be passed and their case for the clauses in the Bill. That is understandable; that is why the promoters want the Bill to be given a Second Reading, so that, when it reaches the Select Committee, it will be scrutinised—or at least, I hope it will be.

If it is right for the promoters to argue their case in Committee, if the Bill receives a Second Reading, why are the objectors not allowed to argue their case in Committee? I understand that the passenger transport authority objects to the people in my constituency who are opposed to the proposed metro route arguing their case in Committee. If the metro system is to be constructed in time, the maximum good will needs to be created. Can it be argued that the best way to create good will is to state, with all the powers that such bodies have, that it is unnecessary for the objectors to be heard?

If the Bill receives a Second Reading, on Thursday next the Court of Referees—a body of 11 senior Members of Parliament—will decide whether that objection should be upheld. I understand that it would not be in order this evening to make further reference to the Court of Referees, so I shall not do so. Nevertheless, having said that I am in favour of the measure, I should be much happier if there were no bureaucratic objection to the case for these people being heard. If the objectors' arguments did not stand the test of examination, the Select Committee would reach that conclusion.

Why, therefore, should we go to these lengths and say that the objectors ought not to be heard? If the Bill is given a Second Reading, I hope that, even at this late stage, further consideration will be given to that matter. The passenger transport authority needs the good will of the local public. I hope that it does not intend to undermine it by going about matters in a way that will undoubtedly antagonise many people.

9.2 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I begin by declaring an interest, since the matter—as some hon. Members have already remarked—is sensitive. I was a consultant to the bank that gave advice on the feasibility study when the metro concept was originally considered.

I sympathise with the metro concept and with everything that it could do for public transport in the west midlands, and around Birmingham in particular. However, I am still doubtful whether a light railway system—or what used to be known as a tramway system, to call it by its proper name—is really the best answer for this conurbation.

I have visited many capital cities and other cities throughout Europe. I have been to Grenoble and Lyons. I have also visited Stockholm, Vienna, Munich and a dozen other cities where they are hurrying and scurrying to remove trams and light railways and to place their transport systems underground, with occasional above-ground exits. I am therefore concerned that the passenger transport authority is running into what appear to be serious objections from local residents about the route. That ought to be unnecessary, particularly in an area where there is so much disused and under-utilised railway track.

I should stress to the promoters of the Bill that, when future routes are planned, maximum use should be made of existing rail networks. If those networks are under-utilised and perhaps a light rail system would attract more passengers because the stops can be made more frequent, negotiations should begin with British Rail immediately or as soon as practical to usurp those rails and put them to better use.

I recognise the significant advantages that the system would provide for our conurbation in alleviating congestion. I am relieved that the latest proposal for lines adds a viability to the concept which was not present in the original proposals. It was made very clear to the promoters of the Bill at an early stage that some commercial viability had to be established, particularly if some private funding, and ultimately EC funding, was to be introduced into the scheme. The lines under consideration would help to ensure that viability. I feel that further routes under the city of Birmingham would further enhance that and enhance the attraction to residents along the route and around the black country.

Mr. Rooker: It so happens that the hon. Gentleman's point about the city of Birmingham was the only point on which I offered any specific comment in consultation. The result is the exact opposite of what I suggested, but I make no complaint about that. Does the hon. Gentleman take the view that routes under the city centre of Birmingham will require people to go underground, as they have been forced to do in the past few years, whereas the advantage of routes on the surface through most of the city centre would have brought about a spin-off in environmental improvements?

That point does not seem to have been taken on board, despite the planned £130 million-worth of tunnelling. When the hon. Gentleman offered his views on the Bill, as we both represent Birmingham constituencies, what was his view? Did he agree with tunnels or overground, environmental improvements or sticking people into subways? People do not like going into subways. They understand the old Victorian tube network in London, but frankly I do not think that they will accept that a 21st-century railway network needs to push people underground.

Mr. Hargreaves: I hear with interest what the hon. Gentleman says, but in my experience, having travelled through major cities in Europe similar to ours, people do not like large, heavy railed vehicles trundling down busy streets in major city centres. I do not consider that Birmingham would necessarily be enhanced by large or

light rail transit down the centre of our streets. Perhaps those streets would be enhanced by pedestrianisation. I agree that people would prefer streets without vehicles and that the environment would be enhanced by having fewer cars in those streets, but I do not think that the answer is to stick light rails down the centre of Birmingham. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he accepts that I have thought about the matter with some care.

I visited Stockholm, which is quite an attractive city, rather smaller than Birmingham but of interest as they have torn up their trams and introduced a system which runs underground in the city centre but is similar to light rail transit as it approaches the suburbs. In those tunnels, which are not as deep and cavernous as our Underground in London, they have introduced a most charming shopping arena and other facilities which are safe and clean and a pleasant environment for people to work in. I believe that we should follow that system in Birmingham city centre. I put that forward for the hon. Gentleman's consideration and interest should he have time to visit that city.

Finally, I turn to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills), who unfortunately is not in his place at the moment. It is important that such a transport network wins the hearts and minds of the people who will use it. There has already been one storm, which may have resulted perhaps from a lack of consultation or from a lack of public relations.

Opposition Members criticised the promoters' use of public relations. It seems that they are experiencing difficulty both ways. They tried public relations, but fell at the second fence. Having attracted people to the concept of the metro, which is indisputable, they slammed the door in the face of those who disagreed about its route or about other aspects. If we are to benefit from a metro network around Birmingham, and through the black country to the NEC and surrounding areas, it is important that people are enthusiastic about it, or they will not use it.

As a slight tease to my constituent, the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), I should like to put down a marker. I support the Bill, but I should be horrified if it were proposed to run the metro down the centre of the Stratford road.

Mr. Rooker: Why?

Mr. Hargreaves: Because light railways do not run well on through roads.

Mr. Snape: The House will be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his interesting speech, and perhaps to *The Independent* for so rapidly provoking it. If the metro were to run down the middle of the Stratford road, presumably steps would be taken to prevent parking on both sides of it and the loading and unloading of light and heavy commercial vehicles, which occurs all day every day and is a prime cause of the congestion about which the hon. Gentleman, and I as one of his constituents, frequently complain.

Mr. Hargreaves: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and for his kindly interpretation of my speech. I am putting down a marker on behalf of the hon. Gentleman and myself. If it were proposed that the metro should travel down the middle of the Stratford road, I should object, because light rail systems do not work happily in shopping areas or on through routes such as the Stratford road, which will become increasingly busy because of the M40-M42 link.

I shall support the motion, but I shall have doubts about the Bill unless changes are made to its presentation and to its consultation procedures.

9.12 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I oppose the Bill because I object to what is described as the Birmingham to Solihull route from Five Ways and the convention centre to the national exhibition centre and Birmingham airport. I object specifically to the proposed section running through the Bromford estate and Firs estate in my constituency.

Anyone who has driven on the M6 knows that part of my constituency. Fort Dunlop is a well-known landmark to the north of the motorway and the Bromford and Firs estates are on the other side of it. The area consists of houses, low-rise flats and tower blocks, with a narrow ribbon of land between the houses and motorway. The West Midlands passenger transport executive wants to run the midland metro along that ribbon.

The Firs estate was built after the second world war, and the Bromford estate was built in the 1960s. The houses facing the motorway were built in the style of that time, with big picture windows. The motorway was constructed a few years later on stilts. It is one of the longest stretches of motorway viaduct in western Europe. Over the years, trees have gradually been planted and a narrow green ribbon developed for recreational use.

My constituents have now been told that all their efforts to improve their local environment have been in vain. The midland metro will bulldoze its way along the line between the houses and the motorway. The trees that have been planted by local schoolchildren will be uprooted, the cycle track will be realigned, the football pitch removed and the children's play area relocated. In introducing the Bill, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) claimed that the environment would be enhanced wherever the metro ran. That is a travesty in terms of the Bromford estate.

Much worse than the loss of these amenities is the fact that the people who live along the route will have the metro running as close as 40 yd to their houses and it will be even closer—not even the PTA can tell us how close, but perhaps a matter of a few feet—to one block of flats.

What will they see from their picture windows? No one knows, not even the PTA. No one can tell us what the overhead wires and their supports will look like. No one can tell us how obtrusive they will be. No one can even tell us where the supports—pylons, gantries, or whatever they are called—will be located. All that they can tell us is that my constituents will have vehicles travelling at speeds up to 50 mph passing in front of their picture windows every five minutes. One of my constituents was even told that the PTA did not want to screen the metro route in any way because it was relying on local residents to keep an eye on it to prevent vandalism.

That brings me to the other objection to this section of the metro route—noise. My constituents know a lot about the effect of noise on the quality of life. I have explained that the M6 runs alongside and above the Bromford estate. In the early 1970s, the estate's residents got together with residents of other areas along the route of the motorway

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and campaigned for noise insulation. Eventually, a scheme was introduced and a large number of flats and houses were insulated. Unfortunately, many were ruled to be ineligible and they are precisely the houses that are nearest to the proposed route for the midland metro. It does not stop there.

At that point, the motorway runs above the railway line from Birmingham to Derby. It does not cross the railway. In effect, the railway goes through a tunnel with open sides. Not surprisingly, the noise of the trains echoes and reverberates and the result is disturbing, to put it mildly.

That is not all. One of the biggest problems in my constituency is the noise from aircraft using Birmingham airport. I calculate that at least half my constituents suffer from noise so great that they cannot watch television or conduct a conversation by telephone or face to face whenever a plane goes overhead. The air traffic controllers at Birmingham airport told me that it was not surprising that there was a major problem with aircraft noise in my constituency. The pilots are supposed to take their planes to a height of 1,000 ft before turning towards open countryside and the most commonly used planes at Birmingham airport reach a height of 1,000 ft when they get above the Bromford estate.

What do the Bill's sponsors have to say about noise? All hon. Members will have received today a statement by Sherwood and Company, the parliamentary agents for the PTA, which said:

"The high capacity lightweight rail vehicles intended for operation on the Metro will result in lower noise levels than those experienced from buses and trains."

That statement is grossly misleading. We are talking not about replacing buses and trains in front of my constituents' homes but about additional noise for those residents. Birmingham city council's environmental health department has told local councillors and me that 118 houses and flats could be so badly affected by the noise of the metro that they should be provided with noise insulation if the route went ahead.

Of course, as anyone with experience of noise from aircraft or from motorways will agree, no provision for noise insulation is good enough. There are two important reasons for that. In the first place, what matters is the total amount of noise—not the noise from several single sources, but the total amount.

The noise from the metro may not be significant in itself for a particular house, but when it is added to the noise from the M6, from the railway that runs underneath the motorway, and from planes taking off from Birmingham airport—none of which the powers-that-be regard as significant—the total amount of noise could become intolerable for the ordinary family living in an ordinary house. But the Department of Transport, British Rail, Birmingham airport officials and the passenger transport authority can all shrug their shoulders and, with a clear conscience, claim that their noise is "lower than that experienced from buses and trains."

The second problem about noise insulation is that, obviously, as soon as windows are opened, it ceases to work. That is why the problem is always worse in summer. There is nothing that the passenger transport authority, or this House, or anybody else, can do about that nuisance.

Hon. Members may wonder why there is no problem in any constituency except mine and that of the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills). Why is not the House full of people making similar points on behalf of their constituents? The answer lies in the route itself. Although this metro route begins at Five Ways and runs through the city centre, it is underground until it gets to the wasteland of the heartlands—a derelict industrial area. It runs through that area until it reaches Bromford Bridge and enters my constituency. Only at that point does it begin to affect anyone's home.

At that point, against the background of the problems that I have described, one would have expected the West Midlands passenger transport authority to be particularly careful about consulting the people who live in the Bromford estate. Tragically, the arrangements for consultation were grossly inadequate. They were regarded as inadequate by myself, by local councillors and by the residents. A summary of our opinion is that the arrangements for consultation were a farce. The members and officers of the West Midlands passenger transport authority are totally incapable of understanding the difference between informing people and consulting people. The information that people were given was sparse, and the consultation was virtually nil.

The hon. Member for Yardley said that there had been a tremendous amount of consultation. I listened very carefully to his remarks. He listed leaflets. But leaflets are not consultation; leaflets are information. He listed exhibitions. But exhibitions are not consultation, unless one invites people's views and then pays attention to those views. Otherwise, exhibitions are only information. The hon. Gentleman mentioned meetings.

I asked the passenger transport authority what it regarded as the consultation arrangements for my constituents. It gave me a list of meetings that had taken place—meetings with Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and Councillors.

The first meeting, on 25 April 1989, was with T. Davis, MP. That so-called meeting consisted of my giving coffee to the director general and the head of communications of the passenger transport authority in the Strangers' Cafeteria, where they told me that they could not discuss the route through my constituency because it was a matter for the city council. That meeting is described as consultation.

Then there was a meeting with John Tomlinson, MEP. I do not know what took place at that meeting; Mr. Tomlinson is not the MEP for the area in which my constituency is located.

Next on the list is a presentation to city council members. Let that be noted: "presentation". But that is not consultation.

The next item on this list of so-called consultations is a presentation on 10 May 1989 to west midlands Members of Parliament at the House of Commons by Birmingham city council. Once again I say, "presentation" is not consultation.

The next on the list is a briefing of Councillor R. Spector. I do not know which ward Councillor Spector represents, but it is not in my constituency.

Then there is a meeting with T. Davis, MP, and Councillors Turner and Jones at Birmingham city council offices. That meeting certainly took place. We asked a lot of detailed questions that could not be answered.

Then—still on consultation—is listed a meeting with R. Corbett, MP. I do not know what the result of that meeting was, but my hon. Friend the Member for

Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) subsequently announced that he agreed with me about wanting to have the metro rerouted.

Next on the list is a meeting with the sole surviving Conservative councillor in my constituency, who subsequently announced that he agreed with the Labour party on this issue.

Then we have a meeting with C. Crawley, MEP, who is the MEP for my constituency. After the meeting, she announced that she opposed the route through my constituency.

Next comes a meeting with T. Davis, MP, dated 20 October. That was the occasion on which I went to the city engineers' department and the city engineers agreed that I was right and that it was physically possible to reroute the metro on the other side of the motorway.

Then there came another meeting with R. Corbett, MP. I am not sure what happened, but my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington has not told me that he changed his mind as a result.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) is not in the Chamber but, as my Member of Parliament, he confirmed to me today that he still believes that the route should go the other side of the M6—in other words, into his constituency.

Mr. Davis: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

There followed five meetings with residents' groups and other associations—two with the Bromford community centre committee, which is opposed to the route, one with Kevin Hawkins and Forse, the group that has tried to petition against the route, one with the Bromford Conservative group, which I believe to be opposed to the route, and one with the Birmingham branch of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, of whose views I am not certain.

Under the heading

"Activities following the submission of the Bill"—

this is still supposed to be consultation—I read that, on 30 November 1989, a reception at the House of Commons was attended by the hon. Members for Yardley, for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) and for Northfield.

Then we have a meeting on 22 January with T. Davis, MP at Summer lane. That meeting was arranged by the hon. Member for Yardley and I shall come to it in a moment. But that is not consultation; that was never consultation; it was information.

My constituents, the local councillors in my constituency and myself suggested in June 1989, after the route was made public, that it would be a good idea if we had real consultation. We suggested that the way to do that was to set up a working party with representatives of the city council, the passenger transport authority and local residents to discuss the route as it would affect our part of Birmingham.

That request was made in June 1989, and nothing was done about it until the hon. Member for Yardley arranged a meeting for me with the passenger transport authority in January, which I shall come to in a moment. Tonight, however, the hon. Gentleman told the House that there were changes in the original route through the Bromford estate as a result of what he described as consultation.

Mr. Bevan: Will my hon. Friend allow me?

Mr. Davis: I am not the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend, but I shall certainly give way.

Mr. Bevan: As a matter of fact, I regard the hon. Gentleman as my hon. Friend even though he sits on the Opposition Benches, and I am not frightened of saying so.

I think that I was wrong in what I said. The hon. Gentleman asked me whether there had been any changes in the route, and I thought that he meant the whole route. When I said that it had been moved, I had in mind the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills). I want to put that right straight away.

If you will allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall take this opportunity while I am on my feet to deal with another matter. Although the hon. Member for Hodge Hill does not construe any of the meetings that he has mentioned so far as consultation, he did not mention—on top of all the leaflets and officers' meetings at the Bromford neighbourhood office—the sports centre meeting, which I should have thought was consultation.

It must be noted that, in all those consultations, Centro received very few letters or telephone calls from Bromford residents. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would concede that every attempt had been made to consult all along—and that includes the meeting that I subsequently arranged for him because he told me then that no meetings had been held.

Hon. Members have referred to the option of taking the route the other side of the M6 and said that that would be more sensible. That option was looked at, but it would have cost another £16·6 million and would have reduced the potential number of travellers by two thirds.

Mr. Davis: If I may intervene in the hon. Gentleman's intervention, I will come to those points in due course if I am allowed to make my speech.

The hon. Gentleman is right. A public meeting was held. It was requested by the councillors in my constituency and by me, and that meeting was very well attended. I do not have a record of the number of phone calls made by my constituents, nor do I have a record of the number of letters that they sent. If the hon. Member for Yardley is concerned about the number of phone calls, it would be easy to get my constituents to telephone the PTA. However, my constituents thought that they should be consulted face to face. Consultation does not take place on the telephone. Telephone calls may be all right for protests, but they are no good for consultation.

My constituents wanted consultation. What we requested and what all the councillors in my constituency supported——

Mr. Bevan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davis: The hon. Member for Yardley may shake his head, but even the Conservative councillors supported our request. We wanted a working party to discuss the route as it affected that part of Birmingham.

The hon. Member for Yardley referred to the public meeting at which we made clear our views about the two proposed routes. Earlier, the hon. Member for Yardley said that the chosen route was, as he described it, on the periphery of the Bromford estate instead of along what he called a spine road—he means Bromford drive. To suggest that the change was the result of consultation is a travesty of what really happened.

[Mr. Davis]

The PTA thought that it had been clever. It told the people on the Bromford estate that there were two alternative routes through the estate, both of which were bad, but that one was worse than the other because it affected more homes. The PTA asked the people on the Bromford estate to choose between the alternatives.

The PTA was trying to set one set of residents against the other. It wanted to set them arguing among themselves about whose homes should be affected. That was the old tactic of divide and rule.

The residents, local councillors and I refused to be taken in by the clever people in the PTA. We refused to choose whose home should be sacrificed. Instead, we came up with a third option which would not affect any homes.

The hon. Member for Yardley referred to a referendum. He said that the clear majority of people affected by the route are in favour of it. He referred to a figure of 62 per cent. in favour. That statistic conceals the truth.

Mr. Bevan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davis: The hon. Member for Yardley may disagree with me, but I found the figures in the PTA's documents. The PTA admits that, in the Bromford estate, only 10 per cent. of people were in favour of either of the metro routes. Ninety per cent. voted against the proposal. The hon. Member for Yardley has done less than his duty to the House by not stressing that point.

The hon. Member for Yardley said that there had been a previous scheme. That is true. Five or six years ago, a scheme was abandoned because, according to the hon. Member for Yardley, it was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I am not sure what he means by the wrong time, but it was certainly in the wrong place. But the officers and some members of the PTA do not agree with the hon. Member for Yardley. They have said openly and publicly that they still believe that the original route, demolishing one side of Coleshill road, was the best possible option.

The hon. Member for Yardley also said that the new route would help to regenerate the industrial wastelands of Birmingham. That is an interesting comment and it is precisely what my constituents, the councillors in my constituency and I have suggested.

We suggested that the metro route should run on the other side of the motorway where no one lives. We suggested that it should run through the Fort Dunlop site, which is ripe for redevelopment. That site has been included in the heartlands area to which I referred earlier and which the hon. Member for Yardley described as an industrial area scheduled for redevelopment. The metro is intended to serve that heartlands area elsewhere along its route.

If the metro ran through the Fort Dunlop site to the north of the motorway, instead of through the Bromford estate to the south, no one's home would be affected. A spokesman for the West Midlands passenger transport authority, Mr. Michael Parker, has said publicly that the residents objecting to this Bill are trying to move the metro from their backyard to someone else's backyard. As for my constituents, that is a completely unjustified slur on a group of very reasonable and very responsible people. We have suggested a different route which goes through Fort Dunlop and affects nobody's backyard.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) referred to legitimate objections to development near someone's home, the need to strike a balance and consider where legitimate objections shade into unreasonable objections, and the need to put the development near people instead of on derelict land. In Birmingham, for most of the route, the development runs through derelict land. It does not go near anyone's home until it reaches the Bromford estate.

Not only residents of the Bromford estate have suggested the alternative route. It is supported by all the councillors in the ward, by all the councillors in my constituency, by myself as local Member of Parliament, by our Member of the European Parliament, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington, whose views are particularly important because the Fort Dunlop site is in his constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South explained that it was sometimes difficult to choose between sectarian interests and the broader public interest. But this is not a case of being opposed to the metro system; it is a case of being opposed to the route as it will affect the Bromford estate. It is not only a small group of residents, but the overwhelming majority of people in that estate, all their councillors, their Member of Parliament and their Member of the European Parliament. We asked for a working party to consider our objections and our alternative route, and our request was rejected. I inform my hon. Friends from Walsall that my consultation experience has been very different from theirs.

The response to the alternative by the West Midlands passenger transport authority has been as inadequate as the original arrangements for consultation. Basically, it told us that there are three reasons for rejecting it, and two of those reasons were reflected by the hon. Member for Yardley. First, it told us that it was not physically possible, because a new road called a spine road—that is where the term comes from—is planned for the northern side of the motorway to assist redevelopment of the heartlands, and it was physically impossible to find room for a spine road and the metro.

That is a serious objection, so I went to see the chairman of Birmingham Heartlands, a former conservative Member of this House, Sir Reginald Eyre, and I went to the city engineers' department. I was told that in fact it was physically possible to find room for both the road and the metro. So we knocked that objection on the head. The PTA then fell back on its second objection, which was, "Ah, we don't really mean that it is physically impossible; we mean that it is too expensive." We asked how expensive, and it said, "An extra £12 million." It was not £16 million. The hon. Member for Yardley used a bogus figure, which I will explain to him afterwards in detail if he wishes. The extra cost is £12 million. That is the figure that we got. We were told that it will cost that much because a tunnel would have to be built to get the metro to the other side of the motorway.

That sounded like a lot of money, so we asked how that sum compared with the total cost of the scheme. We were told that the total cost of the route from Five Ways to Birmingham airport would be £224 million. We said, "That sounds an even bigger amount of money." We were

told, "Yes, it is expensive because we need to build a tunnel through the city centre." We said, "Oh yes, how much will that tunnel cost?"

We were then told that the authority was planning to provide not one but five separate tunnels, at a cost of £100 million, to ensure that the metro is environmentally acceptable in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), plus £7·5 million to get the metro from my constituency into the neighbouring constituency of Meriden, plus another £12·5 million for tunnels in Solihull. The authority is willing to spend £120 million for five tunnels elsewhere, but it will not spend £12 million—one tenth of the total—for a tunnel to ensure that the route is environmentally acceptable to the people who live on the Bromford estate.

When the PTA was faced with that comparison, it fell back on its third objection. It said, "In any case, we cannot put the metro on the other side of the motorway because it would have an adverse effect of ridership. We want the people of the Bromford estate to use it. We do not think that the people of Bromford estate will go to the other side of the motorway to use it. We want to put the metro as near as possible to the homes of people living in the Bromford estate so that they can pop on to the metro and go to Five Ways, the convention centre, the national exhibition centre and Birmingham airport whenever they like."

The residents and I asked the authority to tell us what the effects on ridership would be. It told us that if the metro ran to the north of the motorway, the number of people using it would be reduced by two thirds. That is the figure that the hon. Member for Yardley used. When we asked what that meant in terms of passenger journeys, we were told that the number of trips—that is what the authority calls it—would be reduced from between 1,900 and 2,200 trips a day to between 500 and 800 trips a day. When we expressed some incredulity about those figures, we were told that they came out of the computer of the passenger transport authority. We all know about computers. My constituents and I wanted to know why the computer said that there would be a reduction of two thirds, or 66 per cent., rather than some other percentage.

We asked the passenger transport authority what assumptions it had put into the computer to produce the figures. We were told, "You will have to come back because we do not have time to do it today and the man who is responsible for it has to catch a train to Derby." That is what they call consultation.

As the House will have gathered, my constituents are not easily fooled. By now they have come to distrust any figures given to them by the passenger transport authority. They have looked at the report given to the city council in January about the effect on ridership figures of moving the metro route.

The residents of Bromford estate have drawn my attention to the one thing that we have been told about ridership figures. The figures assume that, if the metro ran to the north of the motorway, it would not be possible to provide a station at Bromford Bridge. At the same time, one of the few facts that we have elicited about the calculation of the extra cost—which produced a figure of £12 million for a tunnel—is that it includes £7·5 million for the cost of providing an underground station at Bromford Bridge.

The passenger transport authority and the hon. Member for Yardley claim at one and the same time that, if the metro ran to the north of the motorway, the ridership figures would be reduced by two thirds because there would not be a station at Bromford Bridge, and that it would be prohibitively expensive for the metro to go north of the motorway because it would mean building an underground station at Bromford Bridge. They cannot have it both ways.

The House will understand why my constituents, the local councillors and I are beginning to suspect that the West Midlands passenger transport authority has made up its mind that the metro will run through the Bromford estate and is trying to cook the figures to justify its choice. My constituents have suggested a constructive alternative, but the only response of the passenger transport authority has been to oppose it with arguments that are incorrect, incredible and inconsistent.

I now come to what I regard as the worst aspect of the affair. Hon. Members who have just come into the Chamber are probably saying to themselves that a case has been made for a careful and independent examination in Committee of the details of the route as it will affect the Bromford and Firs estates. Supporters of the Bill may argue, "The objections are merely details; let us vote for the Bill tonight. Let us vote for it in principle and leave the details of the route to the Committee. After all, the residents of the Bromford and Firs estates have petitioned against the Bill and their case can be examined in Committee." I regret to tell the House, as other hon. Members have, that the determination of the West Midlands passenger transport authority to bulldoze the Bill and the route on to the statute book knows no bounds of decency or democracy.

As soon as my constituents lodged their petition against the Bill, the passenger transport authority lodged an objection to their right to be heard by a Committee of the House, on the grounds that the authority did not intend compulsorily to purchase my constituents' homes but only to impose unacceptable noise levels and take away their view. This is a matter to be settled by the Court of Referees, and I ask the House to take note of the attitude of the West Midlands passenger transport authority.

Altogether, 34 organisations have petitioned against the Bill, including banks, property developers, businesses, educational institutions, statutory undertakings and British Rail. They include organisations as diverse as the Post Office and the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, and five residents' groups in Walsall, Solihull and my constituency.

The Minister suggested that the Bill should be given its Second Reading so that it can be examined in detail in Committee. The hon. Member for Yardley suggested much the same in introducing the Bill. However, unlike the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was kind enough to express his concern on this point. My constituents are much heartened by my hon. Friend's letter on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, which told them in September:

> "During the last metro controversy in the area, I did make the point to Councillor Bateman that it was impossible to implement a new transport system without the active support of the residents. I will liaise with Terry Davis over this matter once Parliament has resumed to ensure that no development takes place without the consultation and consent of local residents."

There is no doubt that the project does not have the consent of the residents in my constituency. The passenger

[Mr. Davis]

transport authority is trying to stop residents putting their views to a Committee of this House. It has objected to all the resident groups' rights to be heard.

Those residents are ordinary people—people whose only investments are in their homes—yet the passenger transport authority wants to prevent them from having the opportunity to explain their fears and objections to Members of Parliament.

Throughout the build-up to the Bill, the attitude of the passenger transport authority has been, "Don't question us. We know what is good for you." That is not democracy, it is dictatorship, and that in itself is a good enough reason for opposing the Bill.

9.46 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I have spent six hours in the Chamber, but it has been worth it because I have been able to listen to the debate and to hon. Members who actually represent their constituencies. As transport spokesman for my party, I have received representations from Walsall members of my party which I should like to put on the record tonight. I also represent people who have written to me out of the blue because I am my party's transport spokesman. I have received many letters, although perhaps not quite as many as those received by some Conservative Members.

Mr. Turner: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that he has also received letters of support for the metro from Liberals in Wolverhampton?

Mr. Fearn: I have had a letter from one councillor who, I believe, is not standing at the next election. However, I have received many other letters. Liberal Democrats in Walsall have been working hard on this issue.

Liberal Democrats are not opposed to light railway systems and I would support them wherever they may be proposed, although I shall speak out if they affect people's homes, as has been suggested tonight. Nor are Walsall Liberal Democrats opposed to a light railway. They support the Walsall-Wednesbury link, although they are opposed to the Walsall-Wolverhampton link, firstly on environmental grounds in certain areas. The planned route will decimate the Greenway between the M6 and St. Annes road. The elevated section between Granbourn road and Clarke's lane would apparently be lost altogether and the Willenhall memorial park, which has been mentioned, will be intruded upon. The park is a memorial to the dead of the first world war.

I also know that the rail will run just feet from the back doors of residents in Belinda close and that 2,000 signatures in opposition to the route have been presented. I know that the Bill's promoter said that 15 per cent. object to the Bill, but what I do not know is, 15 per cent. of what figure? The involvement of 2,000 residents sounds a great number to me, and they should be listened to.

There is already a confused road network in the area, and I believe that the chosen route will create chaos in that network with its eight level crossings.

For the metro to be successful, it should be street-running for the majority of its length. Perhaps comment will be made on that aspect of light rail—should it or should it not be street-running? The Liberal Democrat Chief Whip and four other persons walked the route, and I can tell the House that the majority of it has little to do with street running. It is a quiet walk and there are few houses.

Have options been considered closely? What are the objections to re-establishing the heavy rail link between Walsall and Wolverhampton by extending the Shrewsbury sprinter service through to Walsall? it is obvious that wide-ranging consultation has not taken place, despite what has been said. More information must be made available, and the residents who will be affected by the route are calling for more consultation. The environment and the people will suffer unless firm alterations to the routes are agreed with all those concerned.

Although in principle I agree with the light railway, I cannot support the Bill——

Mr. George: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Turner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fearn: —unless alterations are made in the planning stage. I tell those who sought to intervene that I have finished.

9.51 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I refrained from seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, until those hon. Members who have a direct constituency interest had made their "constituency" speeches. In principle—like every other hon. Member, I believe—I am in favour of a more modern transport system for the urban areas. Whatever our political differences across the Floor of the House or within our parties, I do not believe that anyone can be satisfied with the present situation or with the present plans for solving the problems that face us. The Government's solution is to build more roads for more cars. It is barmy. There is no long-term future in such a proposal. The world will run out of rubber before we arrive at a solution.

It is clear from the proposals that have been produced by the transport authority that another route into Birmingham from Sutton Coldfield, which can only pass through my constituency, is a prime candidate when it comes to improving the transport system. It would be a money spinner: there is no question about that. The route from another area of Sutton Coldfield will be electrified through to Erdington. The other route from Sutton Coldfield will have to come through my constituency and through the Kingstanding area. I do not have any details, and I am not arguing for one proposal or another. I have an interest, however, and so do my constituents, in the conduct of organising Bills and in the routes that are set out in legislation. What I have heard so far about the route proposed in the Bill I do not like.

Like many other hon. Members, especially those who represent Birmingham constituencies, I have been on the receiving end over the past six months or more of many letters and petitions from people who are not my constituents. In the normal course of events, one passes this correspondence to the local Member, and in all cases I have passed it to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). Many of the letters were personal, not photocopied.

Many people made a plea—I considered it to be a reasonable one—that I should go to the Bromford estate. I was asked to listen to the residents about the future of the estate. When I was no more than seven or eight years old,

I remember being taken to the area for a day out when it was the Birmingham race course. I do not think that I have been on the land since those days.

It was suggested that it was no good going to the Bromford estate on a Sunday afternoon. Accordingly, I visited it at 7.30 am on Friday. I met representatives of the residents' association, having first consulted my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill because the estate is in his constituency. I use the motorway every week. I also use Collector road. That is because using the two routes varies my drive out of Birmingham to the M1. I am aware of Collector road. I have travelled the M6 ever since it has opened and used the Bromford viaduct. However, I have never before been to the Bromford estate underneath it.

I was appalled. There is an elevated section of the motorway and there is the railay line. The quietest thing there is the canal—another method of transport—underneath the motorway. There are aircraft flying overhead. Nobody thought to bury the power lines. Subject to weather conditions, these make no noise, but they are an eyesore. The visual amenity for the residents of the estate is zero. As well as the pylons, the railway and the motorway, there are the factory sites for Dunlop and its associated factories, which can be seen through the pillars holding up the motorway.

Nobody offered to screen the motorway. Trees have been planted, but they are not mature. The green lung—this is a misuse of the phrase—running along the motorway is the only bit of green on that part of the Bromford estate. It is used not just for football pitches, walking the dogs and so on, but for having parties and picnics in the summer. The idea of picnicking under a pylon near the M6 with a railway running alongside beggars belief, but that is the only bit of green for the residents. Someone has decided that this bit of green is the ideal route for the metro line. I have walked from one end of the estate to the other.

Mr. Turner: If all these serious environmental matters are of such relevance, why is it that Birmingham city council, at an earlier stage, did not take these points on board? The route has been set by a Labour-controlled city council.

Mr. Rooker: For the same reason why, in the past, various public authorities erected power lines and the motorways while ignoring the needs of local people. It is as simple as that. The decision has been taken, but the residents do not agree with it. I have heard from both sides of the House the argument that this is a point of detail, a Committee point, to be dealt with upstairs. That is the answer to most issues when one is discussing the principle, but I have also heard that the right of people to be heard upstairs will be taken away because they are opposed by the very people who are promoting the Bill.

Mr. Terry Davis: Does my hon. Friend agree that the whole issue has blown by the intervention from the hon. Member for——

Mr. Bevan *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 119, Noes 28.

Division No. 102] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Bright, Graham
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McFall, John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Miscampbell, Norman
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Snape, Peter
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tayler, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Watts, John
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mrs. Maureen Hicks.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim
Clay, Bob
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Eastham, Ken
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Lewis, Terry
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mills, Iain
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Primarolo, Dawn
Rooker, Jeff
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd

Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. George J. Buckley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 112, Noes 17.

Division No. 103] **[10.10 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Budgen, Nicholas
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Tom
Dixon, Don
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Eadie, Alexander
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Miscampbell, Norman
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Snape, Peter
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Watts, John
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mrs. Maureen Hicks.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clay, Bob
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Fearn, Ronald
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janner, Greville
Lewis, Terry
Mills, Iain
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. George J. Buckley and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

Pneumoconiosis (Compensation)

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I beg to move,

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 20th February, be approved.

The regulations will be made under the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979. Their purpose is to increase by 8 per cent. the compensation paid under the Act to those who satisfy all the eligibility conditions on or after 1 April 1990.

The 1979 Act provides for lump-sum payments to sufferers, or to their dependants, if the sufferer has died of dust-related diseases but no former employer remains in business against whom a claim for damages might be made.

The reason why compensation is provided in that way is because of the length of time that it takes for the disease to develop and for its symptoms to become apparent. Many years later, the sufferer may discover that he or she has the disease, often long after leaving the employment that caused or contributed to the development of the disease, by which time the employer may have gone out of business.

The Act did not provide for amounts of payment or for automatic uprating, but the Government have undertaken to Parliament to review the amounts payable each year.

The original payment regulations in 1980 set out a scale of payments related to age and degree of disability, as assessed by medical experts. Since 1980, several increases have been made, always with the aim of keeping the payments in line with the value of money. Last year, Parliament approved an increase of 8 per cent. from April. The proposed increase this year again is 8 per cent. to take account of inflation since then.

The Government do all they can to administer the Act sympathetically. We recognise that each case is an individual tragedy and we are as generous as we feel we can be. It has never been the Act's purpose, however, to provide an alternative to taking action in the courts against an employer, and my officials must be satisfied that there is no employer against whom a claim for damages could be made.

Since the Act came into force in 1980, almost 5,000 people have made successful claims. Eighty-two per cent. of all claims to date were made in the first year of the scheme, but it is a sad fact that claims are still being received by the Department. The total cost to date has been £28·6 million. So far in the current financial year, 103 payments have been made, amounting to £694,000.

Most of those payments have been to sufferers, or to their dependants, in industries or occupations that involved contact with asbestos. They reflect the poor conditions in some workplaces a generation or more ago. The dangers of asbestos are now well recognised, and extensive legislation prevents much exposure today.

It is clearly right to maintain the value of compensation paid to those disabled by those diseases. I therefore commend the regulations to the House.

10.23 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): As the Under-Secretary said, the regulations will be made under the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 —one of the last Acts passed by the last Labour Government, in which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, played a large part. The Labour party is entitled to be proud of that Act.

The regulations provide compensation for an illness that is horrendous not only for sufferers but for their families. A number of my hon. Friends who are involved in the mining industry are in the Chamber. British Coal has a separate scheme, but my hon. Friends can bear witness to the cruel way in which pneumoconiosis and similar conditions affect sufferers.

The original legislation was forced through by the Labour Government but, to be fair, it was also introduced at the behest of a number of Members from north Wales who were worried about the damage done to people working in slate quarries. In recent years, the regulations have been especially important to those involved in the asbestos industry.

The Minister said that conditions were unacceptable a generation ago. For a short time, I worked for an asbestos company in Manchester in the late 1960s. I am not sure whether that is a generation ago. I had my 40th birthday a little over a week ago, and people like me will be the potential victims of asbestosis and cancers for the rest of our lives—I include people younger than me, who continued to work in the industry until the plant closed. The conditions then and for some years later were atrocious. In the asbestos industry, as in other industries such as mining and quarrying, the management were fully aware of the dangers to the work force but oblivious to them in that they were prepared to allow people to continue to work.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): That was known as the permissive '60s.

Mr. Lloyd: Indeed. They were permissive for management but intolerable for workers.

Because I worked in the industry, I can say with certainty that most of the people who worked for an employer such as Turner Brothers in Manchester were unaware of the dangers. I even remember when a room the size of this Chamber was full of clouds of asbestos dust when the extractor fans failed to function. That was not one off; it was a regular part of working practice in such factories only a little over 20 years ago.

The Minister said that the numbers were decreasing, and every hon. Member will welcome that. It would be wrong—no one would impute these words to the Minister —to say that somehow this phenomenon will disappear.

The Opposition welcome the fact that this year's uprating is marginally ahead of inflation.

Mr. Skinner: A teeny-weeny bit.

Mr. Lloyd: As my hon. Friend said, it is a teeny-weeny bit.

I hope that the Minister will agree with us. He said that 103 awards were made last year and that the total value was less than £650,000. One needs only simple mathematics to work out that the regulations, which provide a top award of a little under £42,000 for a person under 38 with 100 per cent. disability, do not provide for

[Mr. Lloyd]

the reality of these conditions. For most people, symptoms appear slowly and progressively after many years of exposure to dust. The typical award of £7,000 is available to people who are well into their 50s or 60s, or are sometimes even older. The idea that this is a particularly generous compensation system does not accord with the facts.

The Minister said that the scheme was not designed to replace a civil claim against a previous employer. If an employer were found to be negligent in respect of a former employee or an existing employee who had become a victim of one of these dust-related diseases, the award would inevitably be higher than the amounts set out under these regulations.

It must be pointed out that the levels of compensation simply do not equate with the human suffering of the victims of these conditions. The £41,000 maximum is not typical. The typical award is not even the £18,996 that goes to a dependant of someone who has died. The typical award is the £7,000, or thereabouts.

One part of these regulations says that the level of compensation relates to the degree of disability assessed within 12 months of the disability being discovered. By its very nature, this is a progressive condition, and most people are assessed at a level well below that of which they will eventually become victims. Someone whose disability is assessed at 10 per cent. or less within 12 months of the condition being discovered will have his compensation based on that figure, even though he may eventually suffer disability of 100 per cent.

I should like the Minister to look at, and perhaps later comment on, the scheme run by the National Union of Mineworkers, which was negotiated with British Coal. We should do well if the people who will figure under the regulations that we are debating could benefit from two of the features of that miners' scheme. Those in the coal industry are entitled to the same type of lump sum, but there are two other features.

First, there is a reduced earnings allowance whereby someone forced to accept a job at a lower rate of pay is compensated for the difference. But perhaps the most important aspect of the British Coal scheme is that it recognises that these are progressive conditions, that, with continued exposure, the victims of dust-related diseases will suffer progressively. Even if an initial compensation assessment is low, a later assessment may be much higher. It is important that compensation be related not to the initial but to the final level of disability. I hope that the Minister will take those points on board and comment on the possibility of extending those two very sensible practices to people claiming these awards.

There is another point that I hope the hon. Gentleman will pick up. It concerns people in coal mining as well as people who might benefit from extension of the reduced-earnings allowances principle to this compensation system. There is concern among miners in particular that, under social security legislation, the reduced earnings allowance will be phased out for new claimants.

Anybody faced with that situation would have an economic motive not to claim compensation under any scheme but to stay at a higher-paid job even if, by so doing, he would almost certainly guarantee that his condition would become not just progressively worse—that would be happening anyway—but progressively worse at an increasing rate. Sadly, we are building into schemes provisions that give people a financial incentive to do further damage to themselves.

It would be unreasonable to do anything but welcome this uprating at the rate of inflation, or thereabouts. However, there are serious doubts as to whether the scheme provides for the levels of compensation that we should like. It is not a costly scheme. Relatively few people benefit from it. We have heard that last year it cost a little over £600,000, and that in the previous year the cost was a little less than £500,000. Those sums are relatively modest compared with the suffering of those involved.

I urge the Minister carefully to consider the points that I have raised about progression and the operation of a system of reduced earnings allowances. If we can hope for such a system and for compensation that is slightly more realistic in terms of what a civil court might decide, we can say that we have begun to stablish a framework for a compensation scheme that recognises the suffering that people have undergone. We must remember that they have suffered because the type of work in which they were involved guaranteed—although they did not know it at the time—that in later years they would become the victims of crippling and cruel conditions such as pneumoconiosis.

10.35 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister's announcement of the uprating and intervene briefly to ask for clarification of the working of the regulations in the light of the changes in the companies legislation that took effect at the end of last year.

Will my hon. Friend confirm that receipt of money under the scheme does not prevent the claimant from seeking compensation from a former employer who may have gone into liquidation? I understand that the changes in the companies legislation have allowed claims to be made in respect of a period of 20 years, rather than just two years, prior to the date of liquidation of the company.

My hon. Friend may be aware of the case of my constituent, Mrs. Doris Bradley, of Breightmet in Bolton, who pursued the Eagle Star insurance company through the courts to the House of Lords, albeit unsuccessfully. She had contracted byssinosis from employment in Dart mill in Bolton. Her employment ceased in 1970. In 1980, she received compensation under the scheme. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the payment that she received then should not prevent her, or others in her position, from seeking compensation from either the insurance company or the employers, even though those firms may have gone into liquidation?

10.36 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I, too, welcome the uprating of the lump sum compensation and the opportunity to debate the regulations on the Floor of the House.

I should like to pursue one or two questions concerning the effect of the regulations on those who suffer from byssinosis. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and certainly my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), who has just vacated the Chair, will know—that the "etc." in the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 covered byssinosis as

well as a number of other industrial diseases. It was particularly welcome in my constituency of Oldham, East, where there were many textile workers who had worked in the spinning section of the textile industry, in premises that were filled with cotton dust. Most of those workers were women, and quite a number received lump sum compensation following the passing of the Act.

I reinforce the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), that we should remember that that Act was the final Act of the Labour Government, although the regulations were brought in later by the Conservative Government, and I must say that they were very welcome. Almost 2,000 people in the Oldham area received an average of about £7,000.

The provision that caused considerable problems to my constituents stated that they should not receive compensation if any employer for whom they had worked was still in business. By the nature of the problem in Oldham—the disease was in the spinning industry and it was mostly women who were affected—most of the sufferers had worked for several employers in their working lives. They would leave one mill to have a child; they would be off work for perhaps two or three years and then they would start work again—very likely in another mill. I have met many constituents who have worked for six, seven or even more employers during their working lives. If any of those employers are still in business, those workers are debarred from claiming lump sum compensation.

I know that the Minister has applied the regulations as generously as he felt he could without going against the previous regulations that were passed by the House. Short periods of employment with employers who are still in business have been disregarded for the purposes of claiming compensation. However, nearly 300 women and some men in my constituency still cannot receive lump sum compensation.

I know that those people can take their former employers to court to try to obtain compensation. However, the women to whom I am referring are retired and some of them are quite elderly. It costs money to institute proceedings. They must put down some money to begin with, as no lawyer will take on a case without a down payment to cover his services. Money will also be required for a counsel's opinion and for medical examinations. Many of those elderly women cannot face the ordeal of going to court, so they do not pursue their cases.

Curious though it may seem in this day and age, many of those women have some attachment to the family firm for which they once worked. We must remember that in Oldham and the surrounding area there were about 350 mills operated by some 250 companies. In other words, most of the companies had only one mill and were family firms. That is still the case, to a certain extent, in what remains of the textile industry.

When I advised women of their rights to go to court, they told me that they did not want to take the firm to court because they did not want the firm's owners, who in many cases they knew by name, to think, after all the work that they had done for them, that they blamed them and expected to get money from them. That is not a logical attitude, but I have come across it several times in my constituency. Will the Minister consider that, think the matter over and reconsider the regulations to see whether he can apply them more generously or find a way of amending them?

I am not making a new plea. I have often made it before. I made it when the original 1979 legislation was passing through the House and I made it again when the regulations were before the House. I made it when the statutory instrument was debated, not on the Floor of the House but in Committee. I usually received a sympathetic hearing and a recognition of the practical difficulties facing the elderly people who are still waiting for compensation.

Those women may have spent three or four years with one firm, and that firm, of five or six, may have remained in business. They cannot understand why that short period should debar them from compensation, while that firm may quite reasonably deny that it is likely that that person contracted byssinosis only during the short period that she worked at the company, at the end of her working life.

Will the Minister contemplate amending the regulations to assist those who worked in the textile industry, who I believe have a particular reason to look for sympathy?

[Mr. James Lamond]

10.43 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am glad of the opportunity to take part in this short debate. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I were involved in the parentage of the legislation back in the 1970s. I wish only that we had not needed the legislation then and, to the extent that there was a need, that the legislation had not been on the statute book years earlier because many people suffered from its absence.

I refer immediately to a point made by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond).

There have been problems of people working for short times in the slate quarries particularly in towns such as Blaenau Ffestiniog—where there are several, some of them small—some of which are still in existence, but most of which are now defunct. In a number of cases the Department has taken a reasonably elastic view. Perhaps the Minister should look for some guideline—if that entails amending the legislation so be it—to accept that if anyone worked for a company still in existence for less than a quarter or a fifth of his working life, the time working for that company should be disregarded and the person should not be debarred from compensation by virtue of the fact that, perhaps for four years out of 20, he or she worked for a company that still exists.

I am not sure of the experience in the cotton industry, but certainly in the slate quarrying industry the Transport and General Workers Union has done tremendous work representing people who have suffered pneumoconiosis and whose employers still exist. That union's legal department has done very well in bringing cases forward and in reaching settlements out of court to avoid the trauma and worry that some people suffer.

Mr. James Lamond: The Powerloom Carpet Weavers and Textile Weavers Union and the General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union have also played their part in obtaining compensation in the courts for my constituents.

Mr. Wigley: That work is valued. Unions look after people who have long since ceased to work because of their health conditions.

The other possibility that is well worth looking at—I am sure that the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton will also consider it—is to advise constituents that there should be no odium in bringing a case against a small company. I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about attachment to small companies, but in most circumstances the insurance company will have to pay. Therefore, it is often possible to come to some agreement without polarisation and the hostility that might otherwise be implicit.

Obviously, we welcome any uprating, and 8 per cent. is certainly to be welcomed as far as it goes. In 1979, the original figure at the bottom of the scale was £700. It has doubled since then, but it is fair also to say that the costs of disability have increased tremendously. The information that has been presented to the House in Office of Population Censuses and Surveys studies and from other sources has highlighted the much greater cost of disability to a person and his or her family than was recognised 10 years ago. We must look at a more generous scale of compensation, particularly for younger people who suffer a large degree of disability early in life and may have to live with the cost implications of disability for many years. The Government might want to consider that matter.

I note the point about the need for a mid-term review for people who have been acknowledged as suffering from pneumoconiosis, almost inevitably at a low percentage. How many people in different industries have been acknowledged initially at 10 per cent. but have seen their disability rapidly escalate to 100 per cent.? Compensation is based on the 10 per cent. figure. Perhaps there could be a structure whereby a person is reviewed every five years. If the percentage disability increases during those five years, it would put him or her on a substantially higher level of compensation than would have been the case five years earlier. The amount of compensation payable could be uprated.

I realise that the Government would not want to do that annually, but for those who have suffered disability young in life and have to live with it, that may be a way of recognising, as the Labour Government at the time said and as the Conservative Government accepted when they introduced the regulations, that the scales represent a degree of rough justice. Perhaps such a review would overcome that rough justice.

Another point made by hon. Members in the past, which needs to be repeated, is the definition of the diseases included as industrial diseases for these purposes. We all know of cases of people whose doctors have stated that they are suffering from chronic bronchitis or emphysema and not from diseases that are accepted for the purposes of the legislation. I have dealt with such a case in the past few weeks that of Mr. Evie Davis from Rhostryfan, the village next to mine. Year after year he has gone back to the board to have his case reviewed. The board has stated that he has a little dust which does not amount to pneumoconiosis. His specialist is convinced that he is suffering pneumoconiosis. No doubt next year he will have to go back again and it will be that much more of a struggle to go, as his health suffers. We know of hundreds of such cases.

There must be a review of the definition. There should be greater flexibility to include people who have worked in industries that are identified as creating the dust and who have conditions such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, which are associated with the listed diseases.

Another reason why there may be room to be a little more generous to people affected by the legislation is that, during the past year, the widow's industrial death pension has been ended. I realise that it was only 55p a week on top of the original pension, but it is yet another small element of benefit that has been taken away. Perhaps through the scheme additional compensation could be made for a widow's loss.

Many people who have suffered a loss of health have received probably the largest sum of money that they have ever had or are likely to have. If they have looked after that money, they may be in danger of losing out on some other benefits. If people received a sum of perhaps £10,000 or £12,000 and have looked after it, they may still have over £8,000. They stand in danger of losing community charge or poll tax rebates or housing benefit that they might otherwise have had. That is regrettable because many such people, who face years of disability, look after their capital and we should encourage them to do that.

We must also consider the community care legislation that is soon to be introduced. If there is a move towards

privatisation of services and payment for services, will people who have received a lump sum have to pay for services that they previously had and which are certainly necessary if they are to remain living in the community?

Safety standards in places of work must remain high. I have an asbestos factory as well as old slate quarries in my constituency, and I am very much aware of the need for safety at work. The company in my constituency does its best to maintain standards. It is something that all Governments must be aware of. There should be no skimping on inspection or cutting of corners to save costs at the expense of health standards. We must make sure that industries employing people now will not cause the suffering that we have seen in other industries, the consequences of which we are debating tonight.

In welcoming the order to uprate, I hope that there may be room for more flexibility in the directions that I mentioned and that more benefit can be given to people who have suffered so much because of their work.

10.52 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I join my hon. Friends and Conservative Members in welcoming the orders. I also join them in their expressions of doubt about the efficacy of the working of the scheme.

I remember when I was a relatively small boy or young man, about 30 or 40 years ago, I read a novel, I think by A. J. Cronin, about the adventures of a doctor who came up from south Wales to do some research into pneumoconiosis in the coal mining industry. The scandals of the matters that prevented him from bringing into law the scientific discoveries that he made in an institute in London aroused my ire. I was surprised, and I am still surprised and disturbed, by the extent to which scientific analysis and evidence is being ignored. That does not redound to the credit of any Government of any party, and certainly not to an Administration in the United Kingdom. Therefore, I view with reserve the Minister's statement that the Government regard the working of these schemes with some sympathy.

I wish to raise one or two matters relating to the operation of the scheme where improvements can be made. I hope that, when the regulations next come before the House, their scope will be wider than those that we are considering. These matters have been brought to my attention by that excellent organisation, the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases, and by the redoubtable lady who runs it, Mrs. Nancy Tait.

Why, in this day and age, is the ex-civil servant widow of a General Post Office engineer to the forefront on these matters? I had hoped that, along with the unions, other agencies in our democracy would have fulfilled that function. However, I am pleased to present some of the features to which that lady and her colleagues in that excellent organisation have drawn my attention.

The first is the applicability of the scheme. I believe that the case of a widow whose husband was employed in Northern Ireland has been drawn to the Minister's attention, probably by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I understand that the scope of the provisions may not be as wide in that part of the United Kingdom as in the rest. I may be mistaken in that respect, but I think that that is so. Perhaps the Minister will comment on what may be an anomaly.

The asbestosis scourge is at its greatest in east London, around the Thames. I refer to men who, in the past, worked as laggers, boilermakers or boiler workers in power stations and ships, and in insulation work, which still goes on. East London is now suffering a time lag of 50 years or less in these matters.

As I understand it, the scheme does not extend to those who have not been directly employed in the areas concerned. It relates only to those who have been employed in firms that have now gone out of existence —but does not extend to their families. I understand that Leeds city council has done a study into this and that there is now plenty of proof that some families of persons so employed are suffering the effects of asbestos fibres and should therefore be eligible for some compensation.

Even if the Minister cannot give us an assurance on that tonight, I hope that he will at least say that he will have a look at the anomaly. I hope that the number of cases in that classification is relatively low, but surely that makes the moral responsibility all the greater. Where proof can be found, surely there should be compensation.

I understand that out-of-court settlements have been made, but only because of recourse to the threat to go to court. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) asked whether such threats to go to court should have to be used at all. I understand that the National Dock Labour Board and one or two firms have come to arrangements with employees' families. I hope that that will not be necessary in future and that they can be brought into the scheme.

I understand that, when such cases occur and there are coroner's inquests, the coroner sometimes finds that the cause of death was natural causes. I question whether that is right. If there is scientific evidence that workers' families have died through ingesting such fibres in their lungs, can the cause of death be natural? Asbestos does not appear naturally in the atmosphere, especially if it is brought in on other people's clothes. Perhaps the Minister will consider that point in relation to the scope of the regulations.

I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about the questionable way in which some of the panels operate. About 12 years ago, I had the pleasure of introducing a private Member's Bill, which happily later became an Act—the Industrial Diseases (Notification) Act 1981. It was the Archie Morton memorial Bill. Archie came to my surgery about 12 years ago. He told me that he was dying, that he had obtained some compensation from an out-of-court settlement with the assistance of the General and Municipal Workers Union, and that he would devote that money and the rest of his life to fighting for people who were not so fortunate as he. When he died, a post mortem showed that he was justified in going to the panel, which turned him down time after time.

Last Saturday, a Mr. Smith—that is not his real name —came to see me, by chance before this debate. I do not know whether it is a record—case brought up on Saturday, raised in the House on Monday. It was a coincidence that he saw me so shortly before the debate. There are many men in Mr. Smith's position in east London. He said, "Mr Spearing, I have been coughing blood since January and my GP says that I must go to the panel." He named a firm that is well known in the area, for which he had worked at one time and which no longer exists.

I have talked about the past and the scandals that took place when I was a boy, which I hoped then would never

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

recur. With that in mind, I am not too happy about the way in which the panels operate. As I understand it, the balance of probability is against the applicant. I shall read to the House some of the conclusions reached by the organisation to which I referred earlier, the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases. I shall start where the society quotes a quote:

"'Asbestos bodies are only formed from asbestos fibres over 12 micron, but shorter fibres may cause fibrosis, so fibrosis caused by these shorter fibres is unrecognisable histologically as asbestosis'. (Whitwell: Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, Vol. 71, Dec: 1978, p. 919-922)

However, DHSS Special Medical Boards ignore these opinions. SPAID's case work suggests that it is now more difficult to obtain DHSS industrial disablement benefit for lung cancer affecting someone who has worked with asbestos, since it was prescribed for benefit as PD D8.

Before 1985, the connection was often accepted by DHSS provided there were even a few asbestos bodies and their pathologists would search for minimal fibrosis.

Now, DHSS Special Medical Boards give 'scanty asbestos bodies and minimal fibrosis' as grounds for concluding that a lung cancer is not connected with exposure to asbestos. Not only do they refuse to award DHSS industrial benefit, they also frequently advise Coroners that a death should not be recorded as an Industrial Disease. They are required by DHSS regulations to decide applications 'on the balance of probabilities'. They rarely do so. Instead they often offer very flimsy evidence when asked to justify their decision to refuse a claim.

We find that, when the evidence is argued in either a Civil or a Coroner's Court, the view that lung cancer must be accompanied by asbestosis or bilateral diffuse pleural thickening is recognised as being out of date and not in line with modern thinking.

Unfortunately, the DHSS opinion is accepted all to often, without question and, as a result, many are quite unjustly, denied benefits or an opportunity of even claiming compensation."

I have a shorter quotation from a registered medical practitioner, whom I had better not name. Here is the opinion of a person well experienced in these matters:

"In 1986, after a considerable amount of evidence had been produced by research workers, the DHSS agreed to accept bilateral diffuse pleural thickening as a compensatible disease. However, the interpretation of the criteria has been so stringent that even in many obviously disabled men no compensation has been offered.

There is growing concern and frustration among chest physicians, particularly in those areas where a great deal of a asbestos-related disease occurs, that the DHSS Medical Boards are ignoring much of the evidence produced by medical workers in the field of asbestos-related disease. Even when there is irrefutable evidence of disease they are suppressing facts in individual cases to the extent that the men referred are losing confidence in their referring physicians."

They say, "The doctor says I've got it, the specialist says I've got it, the London hospital says I've got it, but the panel says I haven't." That is the sort of message that I get at my advice surgery. The practitioner continues:

"The members of the Boards insist that their criteria must be met exactly in every case and they have no recourse to the legal 'balance of probability' which is more often than not the fairest way to deal with these problems. I understand that it is likely that the death benefit for the industrial disease of asbestosis is likely to be discontinued next year and if this is so there is even more likelihood that sufferers and their dependents will be deprived of benefit as fewer will be referred to the Coroner for Inquest."

I appreciate that the Minister will not be able to reply in detail to these opinions and serious prima facie allegations. I would not expect him to do so, but I would expect him seriously to take them up. When Mr. Smith comes to see me next, after he has been before the panel, I do not want him to say, "Mr. Spearing, having worked for that firm 15 years ago, I'm spitting blood, but the panel has turned me down." If he does, and those accusations are still on the table, we shall be doing a grave injustice to some of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends and of hon. Members all over this United Kingdom.

11.6 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On Friday, we were trying to reach a Bill that would have assisted victims of another condition. It would be wrong not to mention the fact that nuclear test victims, and the widows of those who have died were not allowed that assistance on Friday. They could have been here listening to this debate in the knowledge that the Bill to provide them with compensation and relief was on the way into Committee. This may not concern the Minister's Department, but I hope that he passes on to his colleagues in the Government the message that we believe that the Bill which was blocked last Friday by Tory Back Benchers should be given another chance and swiftly passed.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The hon. Gentleman has blocked Bills.

Mr. Skinner: I have taken part in such matters only to stop queue jumping, and that is completely different. I have never been in on a Friday to do anything other than that.

Mr. Fallon: The hon. Gentleman has blocked Bills.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is applauding the way that Tory Members stopped the Bill to help nuclear test veterans. Now we know. He is a Government Whip, justifying the tactics used by his hon. Friends to stop the Bill going through. These people fought for their country and suffered out in the Pacific, but he is applauding the actions of those Tory Members who stopped the Bill. Although the uprating is to be supported, such provisions should be extended to other victims.

Is the Minister satisfied that all the asbestos has been removed from the Houses of Parliament? There have been reports that it is still being removed, and I should like him to check that. Thousands of people work here—not just Members of Parliament. I am not worried about them. We cannot call that work. We are talking about real workers, the people who have to clock on and clock off.

I think it was my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) who said that £41,000 is not really a lot of money, and I fully agree with him. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said the same. We can get carried away with figures if we are not careful. Compare that £41,000 with the amount of money that the former Chancellor of the Exchequer has just got for working for a bank for two days—£200,000. The Government talk as though a £41,000 lump sum is a lot of money. There is no doubt that when that sum is taken into account the miners will have to pay the full poll tax, and all the other so-called "means-tested" benefits will also be affected.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford mentioned the reduced earnings allowance, and I think that it is important that we take that on board—not that the reduced earnings allowance is as good as a special hardship allowance. Many of our friends in the mining industry have suffered because of the change from the

special hardship to the reduced earnings allowance, and I want the Minister to give an assurance that he will consider bringing those benefits into the same category.

The case of people who fall below the 10 per cent. limit should also be considered. The hon. Member for Caernarfon spoke about the 10 per cent. minimum; it is one of the problems we have come up against with pneumoconiosis. Although this is a separate measure, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford said, to a large extent it was built upon the pneumoconiosis settlement made earlier under a Labour Government. A hell of a lot of people are excluded because the pneumoconiosis medical panel says that they fall below 10 per cent. and cannot get anything, and for years they do not get anything. I would like that 10 per cent. limit to be reduced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) also referred to the problem, and mentioned the case of Arthur Morton and all the rest. It is easy for a doctor who is far away from the subject, and a member of a panel—he is paid a tidy sum to sit on that panel—to say, "Sorry—9 per cent.," or 8 per cent. or whatever. He may say, "We agree that you have dust, but you do not have enough." It is high time that we went below 10 per cent.—it has been around for too long. We should recommend that payments are made for people who have a level below that figure and that the panel's recommendations are seriously reviewed.

Hon. Members have referred to emphysema and other causes of chest complaints—I think that the hon. Member for Caernarfon mentioned it; he played a significant part in getting the Act passed. Had the then Government extended the Act to somewhere in Northern Ireland, we might still be in office. Who knows?

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford mentioned a doctor's report from south Wales. That doctor was writing—a few years ago—about coal dust, and the research that was done on opencast mining. No Government have accepted that someone can get payments for working in opencast coal mines. People who have worked in slate quarries can get payments, but there has been no case in which an opencast coal worker has come under the legislation. Why? I suppose they argue that, by and large, opencast mines are worked for only a few months or a couple of years, although there are cases where they have lasted longer.

I want an investigation into opencast workings, with a view to workers affected in that industry being brought under the legislation because we now have hundreds, possibly thousands, of opencast sites in Britain. My guess is that there have been very few cases—if any—of opencast workers claiming benefit under this order, or the other one, but my guess is that a hell of a lot of cases could come under it.

I should like the Minister to consider the evidence on opencast mining. I am trying to think of the name of the doctor in south Wales who produced it; we have used it in opencast inquiries. I also think that he should consider reducing the 10 per cent. criterion to 5 per cent., so that more people are included. That is no big deal when the top whack is £41,000. Finally, I ask him to check on this building to see whether there is still an asbestos problem.

11.15 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Tonight the Minister is hearing the voices of experience. He should not look at me in that way; the voices of experience are crossing the Chamber to make him understand exactly how we feel.

Nevertheless, we welcome what the Minister has said. The increase is a step in the right direction, and I hope that it will be made annually in future. Inflation is rocketing under the present Government, and is likely to continue to do so. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the young Whip—the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon)—to yawp from his seat; this is experience talking. Conservative Members talk about Arthur Scargill, but if they had worked in the pits years ago they would not have a smile on their face. Arthur Scargill did a first-class job as a full-time official in Yorkshire, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) when he was president of the Derbyshire branch of the NUM.

Mr. Fallon: Speak up for Libya.

Mr. Haynes: I do not know why Conservative Members keep on talking about Libya and Gaddafi and Scargill; we are talking about pneumoconiosis tonight. I am a bit surprised at their behaviour. That little lad, the hon. Member for Darlington, ought to be sent for by her at No. 10 and given a ticking off. Whips and Parliamentary Private Secretaries are supposed to keep their mouths shut in the Chamber.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover knows what he is talking about: he did a first-class job as president of the Derbyshire miners. He was a working president. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on the case that he put. We have yet to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) has to say, but no doubt we shall find it an education. My hon. Friend has worked both as a miner and on the management side, so he really knows the subject from A to Z—as does my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), who has been chairing the Employment Bill Committee, and who has also worked on both sides of the industry. The same applies to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond).

The National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers has done a first-class job in representing its members. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has had to speak on something new to him, as it came up only in his Saturday surgery. Nor do I wish to leave out my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). He has learnt a lot since he became a Member of Parliament. That was obvious when he presented his case at the Dispatch Box. He will do the same tomorrow in the Standing Committee on the Employment Bill.

My hon. Friend referred to the doctor, the consultant and the panel. I am sick to death of the general practitioner telling the patient that because he has pneumoconiosis he will send him to a consultant at the district general hospital. The consultant agrees with the doctor, so the patient goes before the panel. Its members get a nice old rake-off for doing the job. They decide that the extent of the disease is below 10 per cent. That must be looked into, because after that patient's case has been turned down he may die within six months. That has happened many times. The post mortem examination then reveals that the extent of the disease can be as high as 50 or 60 per cent.

[Mr. Haynes]

The so-called specialists on the panel are not doing their job properly. They want their backsides kicking. I am waiting for the Minister to get up and say that he will do the kicking. Some of these people are not getting a fair deal. I accept that some of them are, but the others are not getting what they are entitled to. They have to die before people find out that they were entitled to what they had asked for.

Mr. James Lamond: My hon. Friend's point is also correct in the case of byssinosis victims. A general practitioner diagnoses byssinosis; the consultant does the same; the panel turns down the victim; he dies; the post mortem is byssinosis. I wonder whether the panel believes that it must turn down a certain percentage of cases, just to show that it is doing its job. However, it ought to remember that before men and women come before it, they have had to persuade at least two medical practitioners —the consultant and their own doctor—that they are suffering from byssinosis. People are not coming in off the street, hoping to be diagnosed as having byssinosis. They have to go through certain procedures before they come before the panel. Almost 100 per cent. of the people who go before the panel must have the disease that they claim to suffer from.

Mr. Haynes: I agree with all that my hon. Friend says. There is a flipping scandal here and it has got to be looked into. People are not being treated properly. All that is related to what I keep telling the Minister about pit inspectors. There are not enough of them to see that the job is being done properly underground.The example I give is that of working in a heading where there is a fan. As the heading advances, they use air bagging to keep up the work at the front. When the fan breaks down, or if it does not work properly, the miners gobble dust into their insides.

That is why they get pneumoconiosis. Inspectors are not on the job to see that it is being carried out properly. Those men should be withdrawn. As a works pit inspector, I should withdraw them. I made that clear to the Minister, and I am proud of it. A trade union official must look after the individuals he represents, otherwise he is not doing his job properly. I want the Minister to grab hold of that fact and to remember it when we are in Committee tomorrow.

I have made my points. I hope that the Minister will respond properly.

11.24 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I shall start where my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) left off, on opencasting. There is a report about a Dr. Thomas who has a practice in Glenheath. Dr. Thomas has been involved in an investigation of the high incidence of dust-related diseases, particularly among women and children. The investigation into Dr. Thomas's practice seems rather strange, particularly as it was instigated by the Secretary of State for Wales, when it was discovered that the practice was spending far too much according to the guidelines and compared with other practices in the area. That brings us back to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, which does not take such matters into consideration.

The Ministry carried out an investigation of why the male population did not suffer from the dust-related diseases which affected the women and children in the area. It came across the startling fact that the men no longer worked in the area, so they spent between eight and 12 hours elsewhere, while the women and children spent the whole day in the area. The investigation concluded that they were being affected by airborne dust from opencast mining, and much investigation is still to be done.

The 8 per cent. uprating is in line with inflation this month, although that may not be the case next month, and it would be churlish of us not to welcome it. However, I wish to raise one or two points which may have been mentioned before.

The amount of compensation reduces according to the age of the claimant. The logic of that is that a younger person has longer to live and will experience more difficulties as he gets older. At the same time, the older the sufferer, the more looking after he needs. The person looking after him bears the brunt of it. I know that from first-hand experience, because my father died of pneumoconiosis. I saw him struggle from the time he was assessed—he ended up with 100 per cent. pneumoconiosis —and I saw my mother looking after him. That trumatic experience affected the entire family.

It is necessary to look at the lower end of the scale. The older a person gets, the more looking after he needs and the more strain that puts on the carer, so more compensation should be paid. Although I see the logic in it, it is wrong to reduce compensation to such an extent lower down the scale. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, at the top of the scale a person aged 37 with 100 per cent. pneumoconiosis would receive £41,000 and that is peanuts. Therefore, it is necessary to look again at the scale and the amount of compensation awarded.

The Government are wrong to phase out the reduced earnings allowance. Many Opposition Members have had experience of men struggling to do a job that they were clearly incapable of doing, purely and simply because of their economic situation. They knew full well that, if they left the job, they would lose a lot of money. The reduced earnings allowance or the hardship allowance cushioned that effect, so that people could be encouraged to leave the work that they should not be doing and move into different work.

I looked at one of the old forms the other day; it referred to compensation for life. It said nothing about compensation being reduced when the claimant reached the age of 65 or being phased out. It was compensation for life. It was compensation while sufferers were working to make up their reduced earnings, and it was also compensation when they had finished working to make up the amount of money that they should have saved but could not save because they had to leave the job early. The Government are wrong to remove the reduced earnings allowance.

A valid argument against the 10 per cent. rule has been made. Sufferers who are diagnosed as having 8 per cent. pneumoconiosis and 20 per cent. emphysema are not paid compensation. Only after they have died and their lungs have been examined are the effects of emphysema seen. Compensation should be paid for emphysema and related diseases. Despite scientific studies, emphysema is not regarded as an industrial disease. The clear evidence is that it is an industrial disease. It should be recognised as such, and proper compensation should be paid.

Many miners suffering from pneumoconiosis have had to leave work. They cannot burn solid fuel in their homes. British Coal recognised that by paying them cash in lieu for alternative fuels. The Government take into account the money that a miner, his widow or his family receives and reduce his housing and welfare benefit accordingly. A test case was taken to a tribunal, which ruled against the Government. It said that the Government are wrong to take cash in lieu into account. The Government are likely to appeal. They should not be appealing, they should be considering how much money they owe those people. That money should be paid immediately, and retrospective payments should be considered.

11.31 pm

Mr. Nicholls: I am grateful to hon. Members for acknowledging that benefits have been uprated in line with inflation, as they have been almost every year since the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 came into force.

I join the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) in paying tribute to the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), who was responsible for bringing that Act to a successful conclusion. As I recall, he did so against the findings of the Pearson commission. One can speculate on the efforts that the right hon. Gentleman must have made in achieving that success, bearing in mind the commission's recommendation. That Act is operated in precisely the same way as under the last Labour Government. We argue across the Dispatch Box about other upratings, but we have no argument about this one.

The hon. Member for Stretford mentioned asbestos. He said that he and I are old enough to consider the working lives of a generation. We have learnt much about asbestos over the past 20 or 30 years. It was always realised that it was dangerous, but we continue to find out just how dangerous it was. There is a strict regime under the asbestos regulations of 1983 and 1985 and the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987. Without being complacent, there is every reason to believe that we have achieved the right control.

Hon. Members referred to the amount of compensation that is payable. Uniquely, the compensation scheme does not depend on having to prove negligence. That is a useful aspect of the scheme. In introducing that legislation, the then Minister of State, Department of Employment acknowledged that it was very much in a class of its own. Negligence does not have to be proved. That is a significant advantage, which means that one is not subjected to the vagaries of litigation and having to prove a case. I make no criticism in saying that it is easy to relate cases in which massive amounts of compensation have been awarded, but there is a danger of trying to relate the sums awarded under this scheme to what might be awarded in litigation.

I accept that the sums involved are not massive. The point has been made in this debate and last year that mere money cannot begin to compensate for the misery, tragedy and horrific times that families face when a loved one dies. I am sure that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) agrees that this matter goes far beyond the issue of money. Having said that, I accept that ultimately we are simply talking about money, and it is right that we should consider the sums that can be awarded.

I was asked about the average compensation. It has been about £8,000 in the current year. The maximum could be as much as £41,849, the maximum for dependants would be rather lower, at £18,996. The sums are not derisory, although they are not massive. We are dealing with something that is much more basic than mere money, as hon. Members on both sides of the House accept.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) asked whether it would be possible, having obtained an amount under the Act, to proceed against a company that had been restored to life, albeit briefly, under the Companies Act 1989. According to my reading of the Act, there would be nothing to stop a claim being made against a company in that way, even if a sum had been obtained under the legislation. It is right to point out, however, that the converse is not true. If a judgment against a company has been obtained or a compromise has been reached in some way, that would preclude a claim under the Act. In a sense, that is a point of detail which is well known by those who understand the structure of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) mentioned the possibility of a periodic review. Like the hon. Member for Oldham, West and Royton (Mr. Lamond), he said that, because disability can increase as one gets older, it should be taken into account in considering the low amounts that are now given to those at the lower end of the scale. I understand why the case was put in that way. However, if after the adjudication there were a periodic review, dependent on the person's health at any given time, the scheme would come to a complete stop. In civil litigation, it is a well-established principle, for obvious reasons, that, once a claim is settled, it stands, except in rare circumstances.

I accept the concern of the hon. Member for Caernarfon. When the scheme was devised, the intention was to weight the lower levels of disability to reflect that fact. The hon. Gentleman may say that that is an imprecise measure. I accept that it must be. The structure of the Act ensures that the lower ratings are weighted to take account of that.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) clearly has a personal acquaintance with a constituent who has experienced a number of these problems. I want to deal as explicitly as I can with the hon. Gentleman's comments. I am sure that he recognises a phrase used when civil servants brief Ministers on these occasions and which seems to satisfy them sometimes—"It is not my responsibility", but the responsibility of just about anyone else. The work of the boards on respiratory diseases is not the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. However, the whole House will have heard what the hon. Gentleman understands to be the findings of that research. I accept that he feels very strongly about the matter.

I give the hon. Gentleman, as well as other hon. Members, an undertaking that I shall write to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and draw his attention to this debate and, specifically, to the concern of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), at what—to put it at its lowest—they regard as the unsatisfactory circumstances in which a GP and a consultant make one diagnosis but the man on the board comes to a different view. As I do not want to mislead hon. Members, I have to say that I can pass no judgment on whether, in a particular case, the diagnosis of

[Mr. Nicholls]

the consultant and the GP should be weighed in the balance against the decision of the board and found wanting. None the less, if such information came to the notice of myself as a constituency Member of Parliament it would concern me. However, as I have said, I shall write to my right hon. and learned Friend to draw to his attention the comments that have been made.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for his encouraging words. The nub of the problem is that the boards are not always willing to publicise the scientific criteria that they use in evaluating any case, to ensure that it is seen as being in line with demonstrable scientific advance and discovery. Unless there is congruity in that respect, there will be cause for concern. Perhaps the Minister will point that fact out to his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Nicholls: Clearly, boards should be up to date, but I cannot pass judgment on particular cases. However, I accept at once that that is what the hon. Gentleman's research has led him to conclude. I well understand his concern, and I shall certainly draw it—not just formally but quite specifically—to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

I should like to make two points that may come as some reassurance to Opposition Members. Members have commented across the Floor on the working of the reduced earnings allowance. That is certainly the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. However, I am advised that it has no bearing whatsoever on the working of this Act, although I accept that these occasions can be useful for bringing in tangential matters. A number of hon. Members referred to the position when someone's disability is assessed at less than 10 per cent. or, for that matter, 14 per cent. The guidance issued by the Department on the working of the 1979 Act puts the question:

"What do you do about claims to the DHSS?"

The answer is:

"We need to confirm that: your husband or wife got disablement benefit or disablement allowance because of the disease or that the only reason he or she did not is that the level of disability was below 14 per cent."

Again I am advised that, in relation to this Act, the mere fact that the level of disability was found to be lower than 10 per cent. does not preclude the making of a payment.

Mr. Wigley: Surely the Minister will accept that, in case after case, boards, having found a little dust, will not make a 10 per cent. finding if there is no pneumoconiosis. Such experience is very widespread.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman made that point in his speech. As I said, I shall draw his comments in their entirety to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Having said what I am not responsible for, and passed it to others, I refer to a point that the hon. Member for Caernarfon made about a person who has had a number of employers, the proposition being that all of them would have to have gone out of business before a claim was made. I am advised that there is no hard-and-fast rule to that effect, but obviously the hon. Member has experience of this matter. The working of that part of the assessment is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and it is a matter that we shall certainly look at.

The hon. Members for Barnsley, West and Penistone and for Caernarfon asked whether emphysema—and, for that matter, bronchitis—should be classified in the same way. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, which advises the Secretary of State in these matters, reported in February 1988 that the link had not been made out conclusively enough for the diseases to be included in this category of disablement. The matter is kept under review, and this takes us back to the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, South about the need to ensure that boards are as fully up to date as they should be. I cannot tell the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone that the change that he seeks is around the corner, but the matter is certainly kept closely under review.

I hope that in this relatively short but comprehensive debate I have been able to satisfy the House about the motives underlying the uprating of 8 per cent. while also undertaking to ensure that specific matters are drawn to the attention of those responsible.

Mr. James Lamond: I am especially anxious about the case of someone who has one former employer still in business. Is the Minister saying that there is nothing hard and fast in the regulations and that he can re-examine the matter, perhaps with a view to disregarding short periods of employment with one employer who is still in existence or to ensuring that if a period of employment represents only a small proportion of a person's working life, it can be disregarded? Is he saying that he will consider that point?

Mr. Nicholls: What I am saying to the hon. Gentleman is that, as I understand it, there is no scheme or tariff which says that, if not all the employers have gone out of business, one simply cannot claim under the Act. The hon. Gentleman would be the first to admit that somewhere along the line a judgment of Solomon will have to be made about how many employers can be in existence and for how long.

I cannot pass any judgment about the matter this evening, but I am concerned at the hon. Gentleman's view —even allowing for what I have just said—that the regulations are being interpreted far too strictly or stringently. I do not have to draw that to the attention of anybody, other than my Department. Without passing judgment on it now, I shall certainly look into the matter and come back to the hon. Gentleman.

This has been a short but useful debate, and I hope that I have been able to offer hon. Members some reassurance.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 20th February, be approved.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Town and Country Planning Scotland

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 20th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

Health Rules (Products of Animal Origin)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9934/89 relating to health rules for products of animal origin; and supports the Government's aim of ensuring that any Council regulation resulting from this proposal contributes to effective and efficient hygiene controls throughout the Community.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Question agreed to.

Radio 2 (Broadcasting Frequencies)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

11.47 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Once upon a time, the BBC broadcast the Home Service, the Light Programme and the Third Programme. I wish to raise the subsequent fate of the Light Programme, which used to be broadcast on long wave, 1500 m and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister, who has kindly come to the House tonight to answer this debate is, either too young to remember it, or—being a man of superior intellect—never chose to listen to it.

The BBC made some major changes when establishing Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4, and Radio 2 finished up on two medium wavebands while Radio 4 was allocated the long waveband. In addition, all four channels broadcast on FM frequencies.

That is the situation that still prevails, but as the House will know, all is to be altered in the near future. This follows the Home Secretary's decision, announced on 19 January 1988, that two medium-wave frequencies should be reassigned from the BBC. The BBC's response is to confine its broadcasting, other than on FM, to 198 kHz for Radio 4 or its equivalent, and the existing medium-wave frequencies used by Radio 2 for a channel that will broadcast a new sport and educational programme. In addition, the present channels 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be allocated FM frequencies.

It is not the purpose of this debate to argue against the Government's handling of frequencies, since those decisions have now been made. However, I must observe that the Home Office department that deals with radio frequencies does not enjoy a high reputation with those who are knowledgeable in such highly technical matters. It is generally recognised that this country came out very badly in the previous international conference dealing with the allocation of frequencies. I remember the grief of the Overseas Service of the BBC when 1300 m was up for grabs and it ended up in the hands of the Irish, who at the time had no great direct use for it. The second long-wave frequency that has been allocated to the United Kingdom is unusable for far too much of the day to be of practical use. However, once again, it is no use raking over the past.

My purpose tonight is to enter a special plea for those of us who, when getting up in the morning, driving into work, doing the household chores or as a background to routine jobs, like jolly music with cheerful presenters to accompany the task in hand.

About 15 million people listen to Radio 2 every week. More than 1 million of them do not have wireless sets that can receive FM. Either they will be deprived of their favourite programmes or they will be involved in considerable expense, through no fault of their own, when the BBC makes that ill-advised change.

I must acknowledge that, at just over 50 years old, I think that I am about the average age for a Radio 2 listener —although, when it has so many listeners, that must be a fairly wide spectrum. I did not have the privilege of catching Mr. Speaker's eye when the White Paper on broadcasting was debated, but I have heard few voices raised in this place on behalf of that massive audience.

I admire the "Today" programme on Radio 4, but of necessity it is dominated by politics and journalism. In the

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wonderful days when Terry Wogan hosted the morning programme on Radio 2, I had a firm preference for coming to work without the background knowledge of the day's events but with a smile on my face and a song in my heart as a result of that first-class show. When he moved to the paradise of television, the excellent Ken Bruce was brought in to succeed him, but he has now been moved to a later spot, and I mostly miss his witty and pleasing programme.

I am well aware that criticising Derek Jameson will probably cost me my seat, but he epitomises all that is wrong in the management of Radio 2. Employed on the strength of his accent and his previous experience as a newspaper editor, his sheer banality jars this sensitive listener back to the "Today" programme with alacrity. There at least they take the trouble to pronounce place names correctly and do not indulge in instant judgments based on brief newspaper reports. Lord Reith must spin in his grave from 7.30 am to 9.30 am, except when the charming Vivienne Stewart succeeds in making the weather report sound interesting. Jimmy Young's potted politics, David Jacobs's smooth and professional lunch-time programme and Gloria Hunniford's chirpy interviews with interesting personalities speed us through the day.

Tempted as I am, there is not time to comment individually on every one of the items in the daily routine. However, I must just say that, although Brian Matthews is an excellent interviewer, his "Round Midnight" programme is inappropriate for the hour. When I complained, I was told that it was very popular with the literary and theatrical world, which is hardly surprising since they are the only people who are interviewed. Suitably relaxing music is what is required, and I hope that is what we shall shortly be getting.

I realise that my hon. Friend the Minister has no direct responsibility for this matter, but corresponding with the BBC has become increasingly fruitless. I once complained to the controller of BBC 2 about the nature of the religious programme on Sunday mornings. I received the riposte that clearly the only time that satisfied me was Saturday mornings. But they have ruined even that now. The only positive response came from Roger Royle, who, concerned at my suggestion that the list of interviewees for his programme showed political bias, discussed the matter with me. I was grateful to him for his trouble and for his satisfactory explanation.

The Minister may ask why, if I am so critical of Radio 2, I listen to that channel. That point goes to the very nub of my being in the Chamber tonight. The problem is that there is no alternative for those of us who like that type of programme. Although those who live in London have the chance of listening to Capital Gold, if our musical tastes happen to lie between Radios 1 and 3, there really is no alternative.

The hierarchy of the BBC, although admitting to the size of the audience and recognising the requirements to provide a musical-cum-news-cum-documentary programme, has now driven the final nail into the coffin of Radio 2 by condemning it to VHF only. The broadcasting research section of the House of Commons Library published a most perceptive analysis of aspects of this matter, including the reaction of those who would be willing to listen to FM. It is significant that, of all those whose favourite station is Radio 2, half were reluctant to do so.

Although coverage of the country by VHF transmitters will be better by the end of the year, large numbers of people will be unable to receive light music programmes, and that matter should concern the Government. Although many car radios have the ability to receive FM transmissions, because they are largely receivable only on "line of sight" it is likely that, on any long-distance journeys, constant retuning is necessary. That is not only tedious but dangerous, although, in this context, I must say that there are gaps in existing transmissions, and I find it necessary to have both Radio 2 frequencies preset on my radio and to choose between them according to location.

I also make a plea for those who do not receive FM radio at all. This morning, one of my hon. Friends from a Yorkshire constituency mentioned a large group of people who, shrouded by the hills, still do not receive FM transmissions for any of the available programmes.

The relatively tiny audience for Radio 3 is extremely articulate and knows very well how to express its views to the BBC, which obliges with a ration of classical music, much of which is so modern as to be intolerable, but the BBC will never face the intellectual barrage that would shoot at it if it were to decline to provide the current fare. The Radio 2 audience does not seem to get the same consideration, in spite of its numbers. Perhaps I should add that, even now, Radio 2 carries a considerable amount of light classical music, which is much appreciated, and the concept that it is nothing but extracts from "The Sound of Music" or pop songs from the 1950s is totally untrue.

The amount of current pop music that is available on radio is quite out of proportion to the needs of the population. My constituency can receive no fewer than three independent radio stations, plus BBC Radio Bristol and Radio 1, all of which seem to offer a similar fare, although I must confess that I find the music so awful and so loud that I am no great expert at the better bits that I am sure those radio stations serve up. Why the BBC should continue to insist on the national broadcasting of that music on Radio 1 while at the same time maintaining its local stations when there is a substantial local commercial alternative remains beyond me and, I should think, most of those who pay for licences.

The new channel that is proposed to take the existing Radio 2 frequencies is to broadcast a mixture of education and sport. That sounds a fairly self-constraining recipe, particularly as schools have recently been encouraged to buy FM radios. What could be more suitable for sport than the use of VHF frequencies in different locations, enabling local interests to be catered for, as well as national occasions?

I repeat that 15 million people listen to Radio 2 every week, many of whom are not only worried by the deterioration of standards and the general entertainment level of Radio 2 but find the latest technical change to move the station from medium wave the last straw.

I hope that, while washing his hands of responsibility, my hon. Friend the Minister will take my criticisms to heart and encourage the BBC, even at this eleventh hour, to review that decision. When the BBC learns the true depth of feeling about the decision, it will simply blame the Government's decision about wavelengths. We have enough burdens to carry at present.

12 midnight

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) for bringing this subject to the attention of the House. As well as focusing on the particular issues that he raised, the debate provides a useful opportunity to take stock of general developments in radio that are relevant to his theme.

The Broadcasting Bill, which is currently in Committee, where the radio provisions were debated last week, is particularly apposite. Even though the Bill is directly concerned largely with independent television and radio, the changes that it introduces form an important part of the background to what is happening in BBC radio. The Bill provides for a new Radio Authority, which will be empowered to offer licences for three new national independent radio services, and, if the demand is there, up to several hundred independent local radio stations. They will vary from the scale of the city and countywide stations that already exist, to community of interest stations, for example, catering to particular musical tastes, and smaller stations covering towns, possibly country areas and parts of cities, for example where the ethnic minorities live.

Our aim is to remove as many obstacles as we can to new services being offered to the listener. The Government set up the new Radio Authority in January in shadow form. We expect the new radio stations to come on air over the next few years. Each will be required to offer a distinctive service not already provided by existing independent radio services. In that way we hope not just to increase the number of services, but to ensure that real choice is provided for the listener.

The shadow Radio Authority placed advertisements in the national press—*The Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* —this morning, and similar advertisements are appearing elsewhere. The authority is inviting people to submit letters of intent declaring an interest in applying for a radio licence together with some background information and other details. That will give the authority a good idea of the nature, scale and location of demand to run services. It can then start drawing up plans for advertising specific licences around the country, for services that people want.

The new services will need to be introduced progressively over several years, bearing in mind both the administrative work involved and the spectrum available —a point that I shall return to. Some progress is already being made under existing legislation, through the Independent Broadcasting Authority's incremental radio scheme. Twenty-three contracts have been advertised for stations of a new and distinctive character. Some cater for ethnic minorities; some for more general communities of interest.

In London, for example, a jazz station started yesterday and Melody Radio, a light music station, is on the way. In the west country, a new station is planned for this year in Bristol, called FTP—"For The People". That is just the first of many that will come on air.

I refer more specifically to the BBC and the points that my hon. Friend made. The new services should provide it with more competition and widen choice for the listener. But the new services need the spectrum on which to broadcast; and the BBC has always had a dominant share of the frequencies. That was only proper when it was providing most of the services; but new providers will be entering the field.

So, at the Government's request, the BBC has agreed to end the present practice of "simulcasting"—broadcasting the same service on more than one frequency at the same time. It has chosen to do that—and we have agreed—by concentrating Radios 1 to 4 on the FM bands. That is because of the generally higher quality of the signal, and its capacity for stereo and for RDS—radio data systems, which aid tuning and which should help my hon. Friend with his car radio problem and ensure that he does not have to keep tuning the knobs as he travels along.

As part of the change, from August this year Radio 2 will no longer be transmitted on both FM and AM—the medium wave. The BBC has asked to retain one national AM frequency—currently used for Radio 2—and use it to provide a new, fifth national network—Radio 5, which will focus on sport and education.

Radio 2 attracts a large proportion of older listeners, as well as my hon. Friend, and many of them currently listen to it on the medium wave. The BBC recognises that and has accordingly launched an FM listening campaign. That includes encouragement to people over the air to retune to FM, and supplementary leaflets and other activities. It is also rapidly building FM transmitters to bring FM services to those areas that have none at present. I hope that that gives some reassurance to my hon. Friend, who was rightly concerned about the present gaps in coverage.

As my hon. Friend said, some Radio 2 listeners do not yet have radio sets capable of receiving FM. They are a minority—but I agree that they are an important one. Although sets capable of receiving FM can be purchased from around £10, I know that some will find even that difficult to manage. The BBC has sought to take a constructive approach to that. It is, for example, encouraging people to buy their elderly relatives FM radios as presents.

Although change brings inconvenience, the Independent Broadcasting Authority did some research last year, which showed that already over 90 per cent. of listeners had access to at least one FM radio. That figure will have grown over the past 12 months, following the recent introduction of Radio 1 on FM. That change, incidentally, has benefited Radio 2 listeners because they no longer have to share their FM frequency except for the "Top 40" on Sunday afternoons. From the beginning of April, the BBC expects Radio 2 to be on FM for 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

My hon. Friend rightly said that the quality of Radio 2 is a BBC rather than a Government responsibility. However, I am sure that the BBC will note and ponder carefully both my hon. Friend's praise and his criticism of its output. I am certain that it will take encouragement from the fact that he is a frequent interested and discriminating listener, if occasionally—as we all are—an exasperated one.

I conclude with two general points. The Government's policy is to introduce more competition into broadcasting, in the interest of the viewer and the listener. I believe that that will not only offer more services to listen to, but will provide a healthy stimulus for the BBC itself. But I should like also to pay tribute to the immense service that the BBC generally—and BBC radio in particular—has already

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

performed for this country—and, indeed, in times of trouble, for other countries, too. They and we have much to be proud of.

Finally, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising these important issues, illustrating them colourfully from his own listening, and for enabling me to set out the expanded and more varied radio service that our reforms will bring to him and to other listeners.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eight minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 6 March 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Catering

1. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the standards of catering in the armed forces; and how many complaints he has received on this subject.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): Standards of catering in the armed forces are kept under regular review. I have received no formal complaints on this subject, although I have had the opportunity to discuss catering and other matters relating to the pay and conditions of service personnel during the many visits that I have made to armed forces units in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Mr. Speller: May I inform my hon. Friend that it is most unlikely that he will receive any complaints? Is he aware that the standard of catering in the armed forces is now probably at its highest ever level and that it is certainly the equivalent of or better than that of our friends in NATO? I speak as an ex-catering officer who has lived entirely on that food.

Mr. Hamilton: The armed forces have benefited very much from the services of private catering contractors. I know of my hon. Friend's interest in this. The few complaints that we have received relate to instances where private firms have not met the manpower or the standards that were expected of them when the contracts were originally signed.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that my uncle was in the catering corps? If people did not eat the salad, he had a habit of frying it, which produced a most peculiar dish to eat. Can the Minister give an undertaking that our troops no longer have to eat fried salad?

Mr. Hamilton: I can only say that I have never been offered fried salad at any of the establishments that I have visited.

European Fighter Aircraft

2. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made towards full development of the European fighter aircraft.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): The development of the European fighter aircraft is proceeding satisfactorily. Work on the first prototype has progressed well, the first full-scale development engine is expected to be run later this year, and more than two thirds of the equipment sub-contracts have now been agreed.

Mr. Cran: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is no political impediment to the completion of the European fighter aircraft? I say that against the background of speculation about the attitude of the West German Government. Arising out of my right hon. Friend's dicussions on 21 January with his West German opposite number, Dr. Stoltenberg, is my right hon. Friend in a position to tell the House when he might announce the awarding of the final major contract for the radar system?

Mr. King: I can certainly conform that it is going ahead. I had a useful discussion with Dr. Stoltenberg at the end of January in which we agreed to issue a statement to the effect that we regard the EFA as the best solution to meet the requirements of our air forces in 1990 and beyond. I hope that it will be possible to make an announcement about the radar system shortly.

Mr. Rogers: In view of what is happening in central Europe, does the Minister accept that there may be a change in the initial number of planes ordered? Will he confirm that the project may not be viable if the number falls below 400?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman heard my answer. It is the considered view, stated by Dr. Stoltenberg and myself, that the EFA remains the best answer to our needs. The development phase is proceeding. The scale of the production order has yet to be finally determined and we shall take into account the circumstances at the time. We wish to make it absolutely clear, however, that we regard EFA's role in the air defences of this country as an important requirement.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that regardless of the political and military developments in Europe, the development of the European fighter aircraft is vital not only for this country's aviation and aerospace industries, but for the aerospace industries in Europe?

Mr. King: It is certainly a significant project in terms of the number of jobs involved, not only in British Aerospace, but in Rolls-Royce and, if the radar is successful, in GEC and Ferranti also. It is an important industrial project, but my first concern is whether it is needed in the defence role. Dr. Stoltenberg and I have agreed that we see a significant role for it as an agile fighter for our air defences in the 1990s.

Germany (British Forces)

3. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to review the level of British forces stationed in Germany.

Mr. Tom King: As I told the House last month, we are examining options for change as we take account of international developments and progress in arms control negotiations. This work is set against the background of our commitment to provide strong and assured defence of the United Kingdom, and to meet our NATO and out-of-area obligations.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State accept that the requirements of an arms control treaty, the implications of German reunification and the virtual collapse of the Warsaw pact all inevitably lead to the reduction of current levels of British forces stationed in Germany in the foreseeable future? Does not that underline the case for a thorough reassessment of Britain's defence needs in a changing world?

Mr. King: On reflection, the hon. Gentleman will find that most of what he said was contained in my answer. We are looking at options for change against precisely the background of international developments including, of course, the position in Europe and in Germany, developments in the Warsaw pact and what we hope will be the successful completion of the CFE negotiations this year.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important for us to keep a significant number of forces in Germany, especially as we must see it as encouragement to the Americans not to decouple, and to keep significant numbers of forces in Europe?

Mr. King: There is general agreement and recognition of the importance and value of NATO and of stationed forces, which was re-emphasised by President Bush in his commitment to the American presence in Europe. We believe that it is important to play our part in that, too.

Mr. O'Neill: The Secretary of State has said that the two criteria are international developments and arms control advances. What further international developments does he require than the likely reunification of Germany, the last obstacle to which has been removed today by Chancellor Kohl's cabinet agreement on boundaries? On the CFE first stage agreement, what more does he require before he can talk seriously to NATO and make constructive suggestions about troop cuts in central Europe?

Mr. King: I was glad to hear the hon. Gentleman raise the latter point. I waited with great expectation as I understood that he was about to reaffirm Labour's commitment to a strategy for strong defence and produce an updated statement of Labour's defence policy. I have the statement here. It merely refers to discussions between the Netherlands, Belgium and Britain. I remind the hon. Gentleman that NATO, the United States of America and Germany have a crucial contribution to make to such discussions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I wish that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) would sit down. I have the Floor. While we all agree that we should look forward to a reduction in armed forces in Germany and elsewhere, does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State agree that it would be foolish in the extreme to agree to withdraw them until proper verification procedures are in place to ensure that the other side carries out its promises?

Mr. King: The wisdom of what my hon. Friend said is becoming increasingly apparent. I have made it clear that we are looking for options for change, but we shall not rush headlong into anticipating changes before it is clear what the fundamental, irreversible changes may be. The benefits of NATO are manifest and clear. One could make guesses about what is happening and what the consequences are likely to be, but we do not back guesses —we work on facts and certainties.

Chemical Defence Establishment

4. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget of the chemical defence establishment.

Mr. Neubert: Some £20 million.

Mr. Buckley: As the disarmament talks in Geneva are leading to a treaty agreement, what significant plans does the Minister have for phasing down the Porton Down chemical establishment to save expenditure on the defence budget?

Mr. Neubert: I can understand that the hon. Gentleman may not be so well informed as he might be about the subject because he has been put up to ask the question. Perhaps I should first tell him that we are talking about the chemical defence establishment, the need for which is not removed by the developments in arms control negotiations which we fully support and in which we play a major part. The purpose of the establishment is to devise means of protecting our armed forces against chemical weapons. The recent use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq conflict in the Gulf demonstrates that that is not academic.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that the work of my constituents in the chemical defence establishment is of the highest importance, and that its development of the technology for detection of chemical warfare agents and its role in verification make the work of the establishment more important, not less?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend keeps in close contact with Porton Down and is well placed to know the value and excellence of the work done there. He is right to say that any agreement on chemical weapons convention would entail a great need for verification techniques. A great deal of important work is being done by the CDE on those techniques.

Mr. Boyes: In view of the encouraging progress on chemical weapons disarmament at Geneva, the fact that the United States accepts that the strength of the Soviet chemical stocks is down to about 75,000 tonnes, and the likelihood of a war in Europe in which chemical weapons were used being nil, are not there much better ways of spending £20 million than on obscene, unacceptable weapons which the British public do not want?

Mr. Neubert: I am sorry that the ignorance is spreading to the Opposition Front Bench from the Back Benches. It was quite clear from my earlier answer that not only did the establishment have a modest budget, but its purpose was not in any way aggressive or hostile. The establishment is simply to protect our armed service men from attack against chemical weapons. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman said, there is a recent example of chemical weapons being used in the Gulf. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not intend that in any future conflict our service men should go into combat unprotected against such weapons.

Mr. Viggers: Is not it a fact that the Warsaw pact not only has chemical weapons but regularly practises their

use? Should not we, therefore, all be urging Warsaw pact forces to reduce weapon stocks and allow inspection? It would then be possible for us to take steps to assist in those measures.

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend draws attention to the great stocks of chemical weapons still held by the Soviet Union. We can only welcome the recent developments between the Americans, in the persons of Mr. Baker and Mr. Bush, and the Russians, in the person of Mr. Shevardnadze, towards reducing those weapon stocks. Britain set the example about 30 years ago by renouncing chemical weapons. We have no stocks of such weapons, nor any plans to produce any.

German Unification

5. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications of the unification of Germany.

7. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications of the unification of Germany.

Mr. Tom King: We strongly support the Federal German Government's expressed wish that a unified Germany should be a member of the NATO Alliance. Consultations on the security implications of unification will continue within NATO and between the four powers and the two Germanys.

Mr. Mullin: Whence comes the threat requiring us to insist that a united Germany be incorporated in NATO —from Albania?

Mr. King: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has read the important new statement on his party's defence policy, which is accompanied by the statement that

> "The Labour leadership is anxious to avoid supporters being stampeded into demands for deep cuts in defence".

That is the policy of the Labour spokesmen—they have decided that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other Conservative Members are right. We shall move forward, carefully analysing the options that exist and then decide sensibly, in the light of a more certain forecast, what the opportunities should be.

Mr. Wilson: Is it a matter of satisfaction or of concern to the Government that when the people of East Germany go to the polls in democratic elections in 12 days' time they will do so with short-range nuclear weapons from the West still pointing at them? Is not there a case now for some imagination and leadership in the Government's approach, instead of their being seen, led only by the Prime Minister, as the people who are clinging desperately to the last vestiges of the cold war?

Mr. King: The NATO defensive strategy of flexible response and of forward defence has been a key element in assuring the strength of the West and it will probably see the total collapse of the Warsaw pact. The worst thing that we could do would be to dismantle our defences and strategies at the very moment when the future is unclear.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that whatever may happen in terms of the unification of Germany, the one thing that our armed forces will require in the future is versatility? Is that versatility better provided by the helicopter or the tank?

Mr. King: The other thing that our armed forces need is consistency of support, and on that issue no one could suggest that my hon. Friend has been guilty of any deviation from a clear policy of support for a proper provision of helicopters.

Sir John Stokes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the economic implications of the unification of Germany are rather more important than the defence ones? Should not British business men be more worried than British generals?

Mr. King: That question goes a little wider than my immediate subject here today, but the implications are substantial. We welcome the unification of Germany—self-determination is a fundamental principle of NATO, for which it has stood for 40 years—but it obviously raises issues that must be addressed. Unification is more likely to be successful and harmonious if we have addressed those issues properly and sensibly.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Secretary of State accept that a unified Germany and membership of NATO is much more likely to bring stability to central Europe than if a unified Germany adopted a position of neutralism? Having regard to the implications for British forces in Germany, will the right hon. Gentleman undertake that any review such as that which is under consideration will take account of the relationship not only of forces in Europe but of United Kingdom forces generally? In particular, will he have regard to the possibilities of specialisation and the enhanced role that the Royal Navy might be able to play in a settlement in a few years' time?

Mr. King: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said in the opening part of his question. There are few supporters anywhere for the idea of a neutral Germany. Whether in the East or the West, people perceive the real danger that that could produce. We stand strongly for Germany being in NATO. The location of troops in East Germany is obviously an issue, but the location of Germany in NATO is important. Germany is a crucial country to the NATO Alliance and that is why its presence there is important. The hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me if I do not go into individual service aspects of our review of options for change.

Sir Peter Emery: In view of my right hon. Friend's answer to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on question No. 3, and the relationship that Germany must have to that, in the review that is being carried forward will he press the Americans to set a level for the troop requirements in Europe in conjunction with General Galvin and ourselves, as it is essential that we should be able to give a lead to the rest of NATO on what we believe is necessary for the proper defence of Europe even after the conventional force reduction treaties?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is exactly right. Consultation in NATO is vital and General Galvin, with his military responsibilities, clearly has an important part to play in that. We must consider any changes in clear

consultation with all the members of NATO to ensure that effective security is maintained, and the Americans are an extremely important partner in that.

Mr. O'Neill: What aspects of flexible response does the Secretary of State consider are still applicable in central Europe, and in which countries does he propose to extend a programme of forward defence, given that after Sunday of next week Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland will have some semblance of democratic government? Does he anticipate having blitzkriegs in those countries and using short-range and medium-range nuclear weapons on them?

Mr. King: That is a pretty savage attack by an hon. Member on the NATO defence strategy to which I understood that he and his colleagues were supposed to subscribe. It is NATO defence policy to support flexible response and forward defence, and any changes that we make in that policy will be made only after consultation with all our allies in NATO. If the document that I have here is the sum total of the new Labour defence strategy—there is only one paragraph that is not a criticism of the Government and contains a new policy—it is wrong anyway because it talks about consultations with the Netherlands, Belgium and Britain, but there are many more countries in NATO, and if the Labour party proposes not to consult them it will be changing its policy once again.

Defence Procurement

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is making any revisions to the future level of defence procurements; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): Plans for all aspects of defence expenditure, will be reviewed in the 1990 public expenditure survey.

Mr. Thurnham: Should not British contractors look more towards Europe? Why should not we sell Sea Harriers to the French? The French navy has apparently had no inquiries from any British defence contractor in relation to any British equipment.

Mr. Clark: I cannot answer for the purchasing policy of the French navy, but my hon. Friend is incorrect. British businesses have sold a lot of equipment to the French navy. Racal recently sold it a communications system. We have recently endorsed our confidence in the Sea Harrier and I am glad to announce that within the past few days we have placed an order for a further 10 Sea Harrier FRS2 aircraft to replace those likely to be lost through attrition and sustain the Sea Harrier capability.

Mr. Duffy: Will the Minister confirm that the opening up of the defence market for defence procurement, as confirmed at Gleneagles last month, will offer the prospect of a more cost-effective level of defence spending, to the relief of the British taxpayer, and will open up the prospect of more jobs for members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union and the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, which is the prime objective of all those trade unions?

Mr. Clark: I am glad to hear what the hon. Member has said. I do not know what the attitude of those unions would be to his party's policy statement, with its undercurrent of drastic reductions. Certainly at the Gleneagles meeting, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, there was a mutual exchange of contract bulletins which means that industries in all the countries attending will have access to one another's defence procurement contracts.

Mr. Trotter: Does my hon. Friend accept that whatever the changes taking place in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, large-scale manufacture of modern tanks continues in the Soviet Union? Does he accept that there is a continued need to replace the British tank fleet and to go ahead with the development of Challenger by Vickers?

Mr. Clark: We want the Challenger 2 development programme to proceed smoothly. When it is concluded we shall examine all the options which determine the type of tank we choose and the quantity.

Low Flying

8. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on low flying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: During January 1990, the Minister of Defence received 381 inquiries or complaints about military low flying in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Foulkes: With all those complaints, is the Minister aware of the increasing, deep and widespread concern in my constituency and other tactical training areas at the dangers and environmental problems created by the increased amount of low flying? In view of the major changes now taking place in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, will the Minister tell the House what is the strategic justification for continuing and increasing this intolerable nuisance?

Mr. Neubert: We welcome the developments in eastern Europe and elsewhere, but that is no argument for not having strong, effective and highly trained forces to support NATO's defence strategy. Low flying remains potentially the most successful way of penetrating sophisticated ground and air defences. Our pilots must be trained to do that. However, we understand its impact on people, in their homes and outside. That is why we have devised a scheme whereby low flying is spread widely.

According to the most recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, although Scotland comprises 30 per cent. of Great Britain's land mass, it is used for only 10 per cent. of low-flying training. Although I recognise that the training is spread unevenly throughout Scotland, I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is justified in making complaints in those terms.

Mr. Dickens: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Royal Air Force, in which I served, is the finest in the world? But the aircraft that fly low across the Saddleworth and Littleborough moors in my constituency do not keep to the moors. They frighten and terrorise the people who live in the foothills and villages. They also terrorise farm animals and domestic pets. Will he instruct the Ministry of Defence to keep away from the villages in my constituency?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend has so many talents that I am surprised to learn of yet another, but I welcome him

to the ranks of those who support the Royal Air Force in this place. I confirm that the RAF has an excellent safety record. Last year there were only 15 major RAF accidents, which is a rate of 0·31 major accidents per 10,000 hours of flying. We make every effort to minimise the impact of low-flying training, in whatever part of the country it takes place. However, we must ensure that our pilots can practise this very necessary skill.

Land Holdings

9. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of his Department's current land holding; and what plans he has to acquire further land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 1 April 1989, the latest date for which statistics are readily available, the Ministry of Defence held 241,300 hectares of freehold and leasehold land and foreshore throughout the United Kingdom. From time to time it is necessary to acquire land to meet specific requirements, although we are determined that the defence estate should be no larger than necessary for the requirements of the armed forces.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that in the wild west of America during the 1890s there were many people around who were known as land-grabbers? The Ministry of Defence is a land-grabber; it grabs as much land as it can get hold of. Why does not the Ministry keep its grubby hands off it? The Ministry should leave the land alone so that it can be made available to people for leisure activities such as fishing and walking. It has enough land.

Mr. Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence makes its land available to people who want to enjoy the countryside, and in many areas we have preserved the fauna and flora. I must put the hon. Gentleman right on his facts. Since 1979, the Ministry of Defence has got rid of 10,000 hectares.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that training land is essential if our armed forces are to have adequate space in which to practise their professional skills and that the space available to them is becoming increasingly cramped? We want our armed forces to maintain their very high standards. Does my hon. Friend agree that the pressures may increase if members of the armed forces have to be brought back from Germany? Therefore, is not the Ministry of Defence right to be reluctant about selling too much land?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. When opportunities arise to add to training areas by buying contiguous areas of land, we look hard at those options.

Defence Industries

11. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any proposals to assist in the conversion of defence industries to civil production.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. British industry is perfectly capable of determining its own product ranges without Government assistance.

Mr. Battle: In the light of international developments, and in particular, reductions in defence, will the Minister reaffirm the statement of the Foreign Secretary that it is Government policy to turn tanks into tractors? What long-term prospects does he hold out for workers in factories such as Vickers Barnbow in Leeds who are awaiting a Government decision on whether to order the tanks that they make? Or is he effectively telling them that their prospects are increased war work or no work?

Mr. Clark: That is complete nonsense. The Labour party is very hot on generating this smokescreen to conceal the probable results of the implementation of its plans. I suggest that the hon. Member has a quiet word with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) on the attitude of unions to this subject.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that, however optimistic a forecast one makes of future defence force reductions, British forces will need the latest, most modern and most effective equipment and that there will be considerable export opportunities? Will my hon. Friend therefore take this opportunity to repudiate the call by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) for the immediate abandonment of the programme for the development of the Challenger 2 tank at Vickers?

Mr. Clark: There is no question of that programme being abandoned until the results of the trials are complete and the product can be evaluated in comparison with its competitors.

Mr. Rees: If there are to be changes in central Europe, is not it likely that tanks will not be required in the same number? We are all concerned about those who work at Barnbow, and the answers that we have had from Ministers so far do not enable us to talk with the work force there on any firm basis. Is there any chance of the Government talking to Vickers about transforming tanks into tractors, or something like that?

Mr. Clark: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that all options are under consideration. Plainly, I cannot give an assurance at the present time that any item of equipment will be issued in a particular volume.

Dr. Hampson: Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that there is far greater opportunity for the work force at Vickers in Leeds since we sold the royal ordnance factory to Vickers and it built the new factory, which is an enormous investment? Can he offer us a time scale in which he thinks he will come to a decision on the number of tanks and accept that the development programme is working well, because there is much uncertainty and anxiety in the city?

Mr. Clark: I entirely appreciate that concern, but, as I say, we cannot come to a decision on Challenger 2 until the evaluation programme is complete, and that will not be until the end of September this year.

Air-to-Surface Missile

12. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans to deploy a new tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are currently studying options for the replacement of our WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb. Both French and American systems are being looked at, but as yet no decisions have been taken. It is not our practice to comment on the individual systems under consideration.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister confirm that as cruise missiles depart from Britain they will be replaced by a deadlier and more numerous short-range attack missile —SRAM-T? Is not this a deceit of disarmament and in reality massive rearmament by stealth, and rearmament which is wasteful and futile? When will the Ministry of Defence follow the fine example of the United States and our European partners and answer a changing world situation with a flexible response?

Mr. Hamilton: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned flexible response. That is and remains a key element of NATO strategy and there is no question of a breach of the INF treaty, which is for land-based missile systems.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the real world if a pilot is to deliver a free-fall bomb against sophisticated air defences he must fly low and fast and that he must be capable of getting back? That is why it is necessary to have a stand-off capability so that pilots—and very expensive pilots they are—are not exposed to this kind of risk.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right; we must have a stand-off capability. We must also have pilots who are trained to fly low so that they can penetrate enemy radar.

Mr. Graham: Does the Minister realise that missiles are tested and stored in the Bishopton Royal Ordnance factory, which covers a huge part of Renfrewshire? The Secretary of State is prepared to withdraw the Ministry of Defence police who guard the area and who are always available to use arms if the factory is invaded by terrorists or criminals. The Secretary of State did not reply to my letters requesting a meeting regarding the storage of missiles and weapons, yet he is prepared to allow my area to be left in danger. Does he realise that 250,000 people will be placed in danger because of his stupidity and ineptitude?

Mr. Hamilton: I am very unclear what that supplementary question has to do with the replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb. The security at former royal ordnance factories, whether or not it is carried out by Ministry of Defence police, is paid for by Royal Ordnance. That is why other provisions have been made for security at Royal Ordnance factories. I am sure that security is being maintained at an appropriate level.

Eastern Europe

13. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has reconsidered its military commitments to NATO in the light of recent developments in eastern Europe.

Mr. Tom King: As I have already made clear, we shall continue to support NATO's deterrent strategy, which offers the best means of ensuring peace and security. But we shall continue to examine options for change in the light of developments and we hope that they will include a successful outcome to CFE.

Mr. Maples: Although developments in Europe should enable substantial arms reductions to be negotiated, does my right hon. Friend agree that Europe is entering a potentially unstable period and that NATO will continue to be an essential stabilising influence?

Mr. King: Every day that goes by there are fresh developments. Today's announcement is a further development in the current confused situation. That is why until the position is very much clearer it is essential that we co-operate with our NATO allies and remain firmly in support of the NATO defence strategy.

Mr. Douglas: In reviewing NATO strategy, will the Secretary of State have a care about the probable phenomenom in central Europe of a united Germany, and will he pay particular attention to the need to ensure that that united Germany never has the capability of delivering strategic nuclear weapons?

Mr. King: That is governed by a treaty at present, and I am not aware of any proposals to alter the position. I have already emphasised that we attach great importance to the continuing role of a united Germany within NATO. Germany is a key member of NATO and it is very important that it remains so.

Defence Support Functions

14. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps his Department is planning to take to ensure the involvement of the private sector in the supply of defence support functions.

Mr. Neubert: Our policy is to expose to competition from the private sector all those defence support activities where there are no overriding operational or security reasons for keeping the work in-house. We estimate that that continuing programme has already generated savings currently running at £55 million a year.

Mr. Field: As civilian contractors are now used for aircraft maintenance, simulated electronic warfare and as pilots, as well as for target practice—although not of course as individuals—why, in the modern services of 1990 and in the future, cannot we have centralised messes for the expensive forces in our garrison towns?

Mr. Neubert: We have made great progress in several diverse areas in bringing in private contractors, notably for catering and cleaning. Catering is a very local service, and we have increased the number of contracts offered by the MOD from nine in 1987 to 45 last year. We are providing the opportunity for catering and mess arrangements to be improved considerably by private contractors.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister recognise that many parents are concerned about the fact that security at places such as Marines school of music at Deal is still in the hands of untrained private contractors? Is he aware that the sooner that job is taken over directly by the services, the better it will be for all service personnel?

Mr. Neubert: Private security guards are brought in to supplement the standard arrangements by uniformed personnel and it should not be presumed that the standards applying to them are any less than those that apply to military personnel engaged in those duties. By bringing in private contractors we can release highly trained service men to matters of higher military priority and enable them to use the skills that they alone have.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Prime Minister aware that a recent report by the building societies and the banks said that more than 500,000 householders in Britain are more than two months in arrears with their mortgage repayments? It also said that, last year, 13,500 householders had their house taken from them because they could not pay high interest rates of up to 15·4 per cent. As they will have the added misery and burden of the poll tax round their necks from next month, may I ask the Prime Minister to say what financial support she is prepared to give to householders, or does she intend to tell them a thing or two? Or will she do the decent thing, copy the Secretary of State for Wales and go?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recall that we have had questions before about that report. Sad though it is that some people have difficulties with mortgages, the repossession rate is less than one third of 1 per cent. of those who are paying mortgages, and over 99 per cent. of those with mortgages are well able to meet their repayments. The number of people who own their own homes has gone up from 11 million under Labour to 15 million under the Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker: Sir Anthony Meyer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Order. This sort of thing takes up a great deal of time.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is the Prime Minister aware that many hundreds of my constituents, having lost the treasured possessions of a lifetime, now find that they are not, as they thought, covered by insurance because storm damage excludes flood? In those circumstances, they are uniquely dependent on the mayor's disaster fund. Is she aware of the feeling that the Government's contribution to that fund, although welcome, compares unfavourably with what they, rightly, give to overseas earthquake victims?

The Prime Minister: We tried to make the contribution to the fund proportionate to what we understood was the damage and in accordance with the usual rules applying to other disasters in the country. If that is not so, of course we shall look at the matter again.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the right hon. Lady take the opportunity of this Question Time firmly to reject the calls coming from those in the City who want interest rates to be raised yet again?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, interest rates are at the level which it is deemed necessary to press down on inflation, and they will stay at whatever that level is.

Mr. Kinnock: Many millions of people will be very disappointed by the Prime Minister's refusal to be firm in this matter. Is not it obvious that her high interest rate policies are hitting home buyers and businesses, but are certainly not controlling credit? Is not it obvious that the policies are hurting, but definitely not working? Will the Prime Minister change those policies before she pushes the British economy further into stagnation and inflation?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the policies are working and that activity is being reduced. The right hon. Gentleman asks me to make further comments on interest rates. He knows that that could only help speculators and it is a totally irresponsible question on his part.

Mr. Kinnock: No Prime Minister has been more of a speculators' friend than the right hon. Lady. At the same time as she is the friend of the speculator, she is the enemy of business and of the home buyer.

The Prime Minister: Business has a higher rate of output than ever before in history, a higher number of people employed than ever before in history and a higher rate of investment than ever before in history. The right hon. Gentleman is trying to upset that by being the speculators' friend.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm the Government's continuing concern for the plight of the homeless unemployed, especially those suffering from alcoholism and schizophrenia, and those under the age of 25? Will she consider introducing new responsibilities for local authorities to provide adequate sheltered overnight housing, with counselling support, to break that cycle of deprivation?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that some people who suffer from those illnesses and are homeless represent a particular problem. However, it is not enough to provide housing for them unless they also receive some counselling, and some will require community care for their problems. As my hon. Friend knows, we have a very considerable programme for increasing housing for the homeless, and for beds in the city of London and elsewhere. I agree with my hon. Friend that those people need counselling, too, and we have that very much in mind.

Q2. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: In Scotland, local government officials are finding it difficult to collect the poll tax effectively. The Prime Minister will know that this morning BBC radio stated that the people of England will be 30 per cent. worse off than they were last year with the old rating system. The Prime Minister's hon. Friends are deserting her. Why does not she give up this irrational obsession to implement the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: I was very glad that the "Today" programme this morning virtually confirmed the figure that I gave the House on 20 February, when I pointed out that if local authorities were going to spend up to about £3 billion over what the Government considered reasonable, that would be equivalent to—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am quoting from what I said. That would be equivalent to a 35 per cent. increase in domestic rates. I am delighted that, for once, the BBC and I are in total

agreement. That increase comes, of course, from high-spending authorities, which are spending well above what they should.

I am pleased to note—the hon. Gentleman did not mention this—that the combined regional and district community charge for Glasgow city district has gone up by only 10·5 per cent., which is high enough, but very much less than in some other Labour authorities.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is rank hypocrisy for Left-wing Harlow council to try to pin the blame for a £425 community charge on the Government, when it is the highest-spending local authority in the country? Does she accept——

Hon. Members: Bye, bye!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend accept that although there will be some stormy weather over the next few weeks, eventually the public will realise that the community charge is there to protect them against high-spending authorities—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very disorderly to have this sort of noise.

The Prime Minister: The community charge will ensure that local councils are accountable to their local electors. Those that set high community charges are doing so because their expenditure is profligate and because they have little consideration for their electors' pockets. The lesson will be learnt that Labour authorities are the high spenders and that Conservative authorities look after their electors' money.

Q3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: The Government admit that the high interest rate and mortgage rate policy is a deliberate attempt to reduce people's other spending, but it has led to a vast increase in repossessions. Will the Prime Minister act to stop the courts repossessing in cases where high mortgage rate rises are the primary cause of debt, or is repossession an integral part of the Government's economic policy?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should recall the figures. Repossessions are less than one third of 1 per cent., and in the past they have been higher. That does not help those in difficulty, but it does not alter the fact that 99 per cent. of those with mortgages can meet their repayments and continue to invest in home ownership. Interest rates benefit people who place their deposits with building societies and those who are trying to build up a high deposit to purchase a home when house prices are falling.

Mr. Sayeed: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Avon, due to a mixture of fiscal incompetence and overspending, the Labour and Liberal parties have set a budget that is likely to result in a community charge of more than £500 per person in Bristol, despite the fact that they will receive £23 from the safety net? Will my right hon. Friend contrast that with the position in Westminster where, despite being an inner-city area and paying £75 per person towards the safety net, the Conservative administration has set a charge of only £195?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. According to the Association of County Councils, Avon is one of the top 10 county council overspenders. He rightly contrasted the position in Avon with that of Westminster where, with a good Tory council, there is a low community charge. We are very grateful for its careful stewardship.

Q4. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Prime Minister agree that it is a little strange that the Tories who are now squealing about the poll tax did nothing when the people of Scotland complained? Does she accept that the tax is unfair and unworkable and that a roof tax would be no fairer and no more workable? If income tax is the fairest way to finance central Government, would not it also be the fairest way to finance local government?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recall what happened in Scotland when domestic rates were revalued after seven years. There was an absolute outcry, far louder than anything heard about the community charge. The community charge is now working in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman may also recall that under the old rating system throughout the United Kingdom, some 17 million people did not pay rates, leaving 12 million people to pay them in full. That was an unfair system, and it is being replaced by a much fairer one.

Q5. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the contrast between the community charge of £148 set by Conservative-controlled Wandsworth council and the £478 set by Labour-controlled Basildon council? Does she agree that the high charge in Basildon is a result of subsidising the theatre by £1·6 million, building a huge civic centre without a council chamber and sending everyone a Valentine card at a cost of £46,000? Will my right hon. Friend urge the Secretary of State for the Environment to cap the charge in Basildon?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that community charge payers would rather have had a lower community charge than some of those extravagant things. The contrast with Wandsworth will be even more effective when next-door Lambeth announces its community charge, which is rumoured to be very high. We cannot say which councils will be charge-capped. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He will make his decision when the time comes, but where there has been excessive spending he will not hesitate to use his powers.

Lowlands Airports

3.30 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I beg to seek leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement today by the Secretary of State for Transport of a review of Scottish lowlands airports policy."

The House should debate the matter, because it has serious implications not just for air transport in Scotland but for employment in Ayrshire—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not remaining for the application please leave quietly?

Mr. Foulkes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members whose constituencies are under the flight paths at Glasgow and Edinburgh, like my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), will wish to express their concern about the environmental impact and the increased dangers that extra flights will pose at both those airports. It has also emerged today that, in Glasgow, check-in facilities for transatlantic flights will have to—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House please to listen and to stop the private conversations on both sides.

Mr. Foulkes: It has also emerged today that, at Glasgow airport, check-in facilities for transatlantic traffic will have to be in portakabins in the car park, with consequent problems for security and safety. Those of us who have Lockerbie still sharp in our memories will realise some of the possible implications.

In his statement, the Secretary of State himself also says that he recognises that the change in policy will have "an adverse impact" on employment in Ayrshire. As you know, Mr. Speaker, unemployment there is already well above the national average. For that reason alone, it is an urgent and important matter, but it is also not clear whether it is intended that the British Airports Authority should retain its monopoly of Scottish airports or, indeed, whether the Secretary of State intends that there should be real competition by insisting that the BAA divests itself of the ownership of Prestwick and allows Prestwick to compete fully with Glasgow airport.

For all these reasons—the environmental impact, safety and security, and employment in Ayrshire—and other matters that need to be clarified, I submit that the only way the matter can be properly dealt with is by an urgent debate in the House. Even with the consolation clauses which the Secretary of State has included, today's announcement is unwelcome in Ayrshire and in Scotland. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will give Scottish Members an opportunity of expressing concern by agreeing to a debate on this urgent and important matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing an important and specific matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement today by the Secretary of State for Transport of a review of Scottish lowlands airports policy".

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Member has said about the matter, but, as he knows, the difficult decision that I have to take is whether to give it precedence over the business set down for today or for tomorrow. I regret that, in this case, the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.34 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are the acknowledged champion of the House against the Executive. It is in that context that I seek your help. Bearing in mind both the integrity of the Secretary of State for Wales and the bizarre circumstances of his announcement, on Sunday, of his imminent retirement, we ask the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State for Wales come before the House with a statement. This is a very critical time for Wales and its economy, yet the Secretary of State for Wales is a lame duck. We believe that the best thing he could do would be to go now.

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Jones: Briefly, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an Opposition day, and I have had no request at all for a statement on this matter.

Mr. Jones: Very briefly, Sir, may I ask you if you recollect that when Lord Joseph—formerly Sir Keith Joseph—made a similar statement of intent, the episode ended in tears and the hon. Gentleman left high office within weeks? May I ask you to use your best endeavours to bring both the Secretary of State for Wales and the Leader of the House before the House with a statement about the decision of the Secretary of State——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing at all to do with me.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I refer back to Question Time, when, yet again, we had a series of mini-speeches from Members on both sides of the House? That spoils the point of Question Time. If you, Sir, chose to cut short these perorations, you would have the support of all moderate and sensible Members of the House—that is, myself.

Mr. Speaker: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his very helpful point of order. It is not fair to the House for Members to ask long questions. It tends to happen in the case of the first supplementary question to departmental Ministers, and very frequently at Prime Minister's Question Time. In future, I shall cut Members short if they ask more than one question, and I hope that, in doing so, I shall have the support of the House.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that I cannot do anything about that matter. It has absolutely nothing to do with me.

Mr. Anderson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. There are other ways of getting at things like this.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that my point of order will be slightly more genuine than the one you have just heard.

You may be aware of newspaper reports over the weekend suggesting that the Football Association intends to bring a charge against my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) for bringing the game—presumably the game of football—into disrepute. It seems to me that my hon. Friend has said one or two very sensible things about the game of football, although—being so close to Manchester—I am not sure that I altogether agree with his comment about Manchester United being tripe.

It seems to me that the football authorities could well be seen as trying to gag my hon. Friend. He has quite often—justifiably, in my view—put the boot into the football establishment, and it seems that that establishment is now trying to shut him up. Do you, Mr. Speaker, have any

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Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) is here, and he has not complained about the matter. If the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) is alleging that a contempt of the House has been committed, he must write to me in the usual way, and I shall give the matter most careful consideration.

Mr. Riddick: Further——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, I have dealt with that matter.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday—as can be seen from column 591 of *Hansard*—you described a point of order raised by me as "bogus". May I respectfully suggest that those of us who represent Welsh constituencies are truly concerned at the fact that, at this stage, industries and others may not wish to negotiate with the person who represents Wales in the House of Commons and in the Government because of his intended resignation? I believe that it is within your ambit to be able to decide whether a Minister can be called on to give reasons for his resignation.

Mr. Speaker: If such a request were made to me, that would be a different matter. I am sorry if I offended the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman gave me the opportunity to use the word "bogus" by saying that he hoped that his point or order was not bogus. Perhaps he would have preferred me to use another word.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask your advice on two matters concerning procedure and the possibility of a statement? I refer you to early-day motion 659, which concerns the National Union of Mineworkers and allegations about a £5 million payment from Libya.

First, Mr. Speaker, have you received an application for a statement from the Attorney-General from any Opposition Member? Secondly, is it in order to debate the matter, on the ground that it is not sub judice because the NUM has instituted no proceedings against the *Daily Mirror* or the BBC?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no request for a statement. Whether a debate should take place is a matter for the Leader of the House, and the hon. Gentleman's question should properly be directed to him during business questions on Thursday.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Today's announcement about lowland airports policy is the second major economic announcement in a week that affects Scotland and has

been made in the form of a written answer rather than an oral statement. What powers have you, Mr. Speaker—in relation to allowing private notice questions or applications under Standing Order No. 20—to grant Scottish Back Benchers the right to question Ministers on important matters of policy?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows the limits of my power, which are set out in the Standing Orders. He need not have asked that question.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I rarely bother you, but over the past few weeks an important matter has arisen.

In the old days, when there was a hubbub in the House —as there is occasionally—we could hear what was being said through the speakers on the back of the benches. For some reason, the volume has now been lowered. Are you able to find out from the Chairman of the Committee on the Televising of the Proceedings of the House whether, to oblige outside listeners, the microphones have been turned down so that hon. Members can no longer hear? I am not the only hon. Member who has noticed the change. Will you make a statement to the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The matter has been raised with me once or twice before, and it is under active consideration. I accept that there has been some problem with the amplifiers, but I do not know whether that has anything to do with the televising of the House. Let us face it: as the hon. Gentleman knows, the microphones are not exactly new, and should perhaps be replaced at an appropriate time.

BILLS PRESENTED

Written Constitution

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide for the drawing up of a written constitution for the United Kingdom; for its consideration by the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 90.]

Blasphemy

Mr. Harry Greenway presented a Bill to make provision for the punishment of persons who blaspheme against certain religions: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 30 March and to be printed. [Bill 89.]

Mr. Speaker: Welsh Affairs.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): Not moved.

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of Scottish Local Government Finance, being a matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Tax Relief for Household Employers

3.43 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to allow tax relief on earned income in respect of the earner's employment of home helps, child minders and other workers in cases where such employment is essential to the earner's availability for work; and for connected purposes.

My Bill calls for tax relief for household employers. Every day, millions of women perform an incredible juggling act by going out to work and managing their homes and families at the same time. About 45 per cent. of all the jobs in our work force are carried out by women, the great majority of whom are married. Over two thirds of women with children go to work. The Hansard Society recently produced a report calling for more women in top jobs. I have raised that issue here in the House with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

In addition, a great many employers are anxious to gain more women back into the labour force. In *The Mail on Sunday*, the Secretary of State for Employment called for more older women to return to the labour force. There is no doubt that women at work are an established part of our economy, yet if those women pay somebody to help them to look after their children or their home, they must pay for it out of their taxed earnings. In some cases, that means that they spend half—or perhaps more—of what they earn, and in those circumstances it hardly seems worth their while going out to work at all.

Some women have to go out to work to help with the household budget; others work because they have a skill that they want to contribute. We are short of teachers, especially in our primary schools, and we want more of them. We are also short of nurses, and want more of them, too. There are a great many jobs for which women are trained and skilled and in which they could help in the economy if only we made some concession to their needs.

My Bill calls on the Government to allow those expenses that are reasonably incurred by a women who goes out to work to be treated as a business expense and to be offset against her pre-tax pay. The present situation is a mess and a muddle. The Treasury's attitude is almost that women work for pin money and that the money they earn can be used to pay granny or a neighbour a few shillings or pounds to look after the work that they have left behind at home.

That is make-believe. Nowadays, someone who looks after somebody else's children rightly has to be properly prepared for that work, and the circumstances in which they carry out such a job have to be vetted to be sure that they are suitable. All that means that, if a woman wants to hire help for her family, she has to pay a high price—certainly the market price—which may well be a substantial part of her earned income.

If an employer provides a creche or a nursery, and the employee who benefits from it earns more than £8,500 per year, it is treated as a tax perk and the employee is taxed on it. Of course, it is not always sensible for a woman to take her children to work with her. The journey may be long and travelling to work and back again with children may be unsuitable. The woman may prefer her child to be looked after locally, perhaps in a creche or by a friendly neighbour who has adequate facilities, but either way the woman has to pay for it.

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

Some employers have introduced child care vouchers, along the same lines as luncheon vouchers. However, that is not always possible or the most satisfactory way of dealing with this issue. Although some large employers, including the Treasury, now provide facilities for people who work for them, a majority of women will always work for small companies and will not be able to enjoy such facilities at work.

I am sure that the Inland Revenue would look askance at such a concession, because it will regard it as a loss of revenue. However, such a change in our tax structure would be enormously cost-beneficial. Not only would it release many women to go out to work and thus to add to the national income from which the Revenue collects its taxes: it would also provide many more jobs associated with the home. Some young people might like to provide some help with children, and perhaps a bed-sitting room would be thrown in, which might help with some of our homelessness problems. Such work might also help retired people who might like a little part-time job associated with someone else's household which would help to supplement the pension. For all those reasons, the effect of the changes that I propose would be enormously beneficial to the economy.

That leaves opponents of the old Tufton Bufton school, who believe that a woman's place is beside the kitchen sink. There will always be a place here for neanderthal man, whether he comes from far afield or as close as Orpington. But there will always be a demand—and an increasing demand—for women to come out and contribute to our economy.

The Government cannot have it both ways. If they want more women to devote time, energy and skill to the economy, they must do something to help them. The most equitable, fair and sensible way to do that is to treat the job that she creates as any other job and allow its cost to be deductible from her pre-tax earnings.

3.50 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I oppose the introduction of the Bill because, if enacted, it would be harmful to children, destroy family life and make worse the injustice at present suffered by mothers who work at home without pay. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) wants to make it profitable for mothers of young children to leave them with child minders and collect tax relief on the cost.

There is overwhelming evidence that most mothers of young children who go out to work thereby cause psychological injury to themselves as well as to their children. As my hon. Friend said, some mothers may be obliged to do so, but that should not blind us to the fact that the consequences of depriving young children of love and affection within a stable family unit cause much social evil, reflected in the high figures for crime, vandalism, divorce and plain cruelty to children. Children have a personal, social and spiritual need for love and affection and for the presence and time of those who love them. It is a crime to deprive children of that, yet that is what my hon. Friend seeks to encourage in her Bill.

My hon. Friend speaks as if there were some vast pool of vacancies waiting to be filled by working mothers. If there are so many jobs available, why are there 2 million unemployed, and how many jobless people are already being done out of a job by working mothers? If there are so many jobs to be done, why do we insist on retiring people at 60 or 65, when many are in the prime of life, and only too anxious to go on contributing to society?

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not have interventions in ten-minute Bills.

Mr. Stanbrook: The Bill is an affront to mothers who see it as their duty to stay at home with their children. They already suffer from the tax system, which penalises them for staying at home. If the Government are, as they should be, dedicated to Christian virtues or even Victorian values, they should encourage the mothers of young children to be at home with them by allowing them tax benefits for doing so rather than encouraging those who see fit to evade their responsibilities.

My hon. Friend's error lies in carrying the cult of individualism to extremes. In some ways, individualism is a stimulant to and a safeguard of liberty, but in this form it is anarchic, inherently selfish and destructive of human relationships. It is the antithesis of social responsibility. Above all, there are the children's interests to consider. Such a Bill would increase their deprivation and expose them to the risks of cruelty and abuse. That is why I call on the House to reject the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 17.

Division No. 104] **[3.54 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boyes, Roland
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fookes, Dame Janet
Galloway, George
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hampson, Dr Keith
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Illsley, Eric
Irving, Sir Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrindle, Robert
McFall, John
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Pike, Peter L.
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rost, Peter
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Turner, Dennis
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Barry Field and
Mr. David Evans.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Brazier, Julian
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Gordon, Mildred
Gow, Ian
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
McNamara, Kevin
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Viggers, Peter

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bill Walker and
Mr. Clifford Forsythe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Teresa Gorman, Mr. David Evans, Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. John Lee, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Tim Devlin, Mrs. Ann Taylor, Mr. Jim Marshall, Mr. Graham Riddick, Sir Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Den Dover and Mrs. Alice Mahon.

Tax Relief for Household Employers

Mrs. Teresa Gorman accordingly presented a Bill to allow tax relief on earned income in respect of the earner's employment of home helps, child minders and other workers in cases where such employment is essential to the earner's availability for work; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 30 March and to be printed. [Bill 91.]

Opposition Day

[10TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Balance of Payments and Interest Rates

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.5 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's economic failure which has brought the highest interest rates, the worst trade deficit and the highest inflation of the United Kingdom's major competitors; is concerned at the rising number of business bankruptcies and redundancies and at the investment cutbacks in the run-up to 1992; deplores the further reductions in support for regional investment, research and development, and export help; and calls for an investment budget for industry and training.

Last Wednesday, the trade deficit doubled to £1·8 billion—a deficit of £1·5 billion in manufacturing and a deficit of more than £1 billion with Europe. Even after taking into account all the Government explanations, there is a deficit over the whole year of £1 billion with France, £2 billion with Italy, £3 billion with the Netherlands, £4 billion with Japan and more than £9 billion with Germany.

The deficit is not just in traditional industries, such as clothing and textiles—in which it was more than £1·5 billion—but in the high-technology industries too. For example, in electronics there was a deficit of £1·5 billion, in computers it was more than £1·5 billion, and in information technology it was more than £3 billion.

The deficit announced last Wednesday is bigger and worse, as a share of our national income, than that of any competitor country. That deficit reflects the huge fall in the British share of world industry, despite all the ministerial claims that the position has stabilised. It is a deficit which has arisen because, during the past 10 years, manufactured imports have risen twice as fast as manufactured exports. It is a deficit that reinforces the need for Labour's approach: an industrial policy to invest in training, research and development; a policy in the regions to ensure exchange rate stability, by opening negotiations to join the exchange rate mechanism; a budget for investment to help bring interest rates down; and a commitment to a British export drive.

Instead, we have a deficit with western Europe and even with some eastern European economies, such as Russia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia, but not, of course, with Bulgaria and Albania—at least, not yet.

The deficit was dismissed and written off in 1987 as due to freak figures, a blip or changes in the customs procedures. As it gathered pace in 1988, it was dismissed as the result of cross-Channel strikes and a sign of growing investment in Britain. Even when the deficit reached £20 billion in 1989, it was explained away as due to excess demand, then to excess investment, and to a surge in investment. It is a deficit that has already brought the traditional Government response to embarrassing economic problems—the proposal to cut the publication of the figures. No doubt, after 23 changes in the relevant definitions, this problem can be made to disappear too.

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

Last Wednesday we were told that the deficit was due to "erratics". That is the special factor in January—erratics in our trade. When the import figures are published next month, no doubt the special factor will be that Perrier is back.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry believes that, by means of the market, the deficit is self-correcting. The Minister for Industry believes that Labour is exaggerating. The Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs tells me, in the months that the deficit doubles, that it is improving by leaps and bounds. The explanation is —erratics. however, the real erratics are lined up before us. In case Ministers want to use the term again, I refer them to a dictionary definition of "erratics":

"geological anomalies . . . the stranded relics from a bygone age."

What does the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs say about the deficit? On 1 February, speaking to that most challenging of audiences, the Cheltenham Conservative Association Patrons Club, he said:

"Labour has got its timing wrong again. In the last six months Gordon Brown has gone on and on about the balance of payments, totally oblivious to the fact that the figures have been improving by leaps and bounds."

After another year of similar monthly improvements by leaps and bounds, we really shall be finished. I must caution him about talking in the grand language of leaps and bounds, when it was a mere blip that proved to be the undoing of the last Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The trade deficit is not a temporary difficulty of the last few months. It is a major problem that has been created over the last 10 years, as Britain moved from a manufacturing surplus of £2·7 billion to a deficit of £18 billion.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Why does the hon. Gentleman not quote some of the other figures that were included in the official statistics published last week? Why does he not tell us about the underlying trend—that imports are no longer rising, while exports are rising by 15 per cent. in volume? How much better than that does he think a Labour Government could do?

Mr. Brown: I am genuinely surprised that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) should believe that a £20 billion deficit last year and an £18 billion deficit this year represent a triumph. When I looked at the figures for last month, I found that imports were increasing while exports were decreasing, that manufactured imports were increasing and that manufactured exports were decreasing. If the hon. Gentleman regards a trend that will leave us with a £15 billion deficit in manufactured goods as a success story, that shows just how limited the Conservative party's ambitions now are.

Never in our trading history, until this Government, have we recorded a manufacturing deficit. Never have so many industries has such big deficits for so long, with the result that we are falling behind many of our major European competitors. Instead of a Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, we have a Secretary of State who is promoting Japanese trade and German industry. We want a Secretary of State for British trade and British industry.

The deficit reflects an even bigger problem that this Government have failed even to address during the last 10 years. While manufacturing employment has risen in Japan and fallen far more slowly in other countries, it has fallen by 27 per cent. in Britain. Moreover, manufacturing output, which rose by 30 per cent. in America and 40 per cent. in Japan, has risen by only 13 per cent. in the United Kingdom during the last 10 years. Manufacturing output has fallen throughout the last 10 years in metal goods, mechanical engineering, motor vehicles, drink and tobacco, textiles, man-made fibres, clothing, footwear and leather—all that, in the old workshop of the world.

Perhaps the greatest failure of all is that manufacturing investment has moved up only very slowly during that 10-year period, while it has risen far faster in all our competitor countries, including a 40 per cent. rise in Japan.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman said that part of the Labour party's policy for reversing the balance of payments deficit would be to negotiate to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System. At what exchange rate does he think we should join?

Mr. Brown: The exchange rate that is best at the time for British industry. Does the hon. Gentleman expect the Chancellor to tell him what the right exchange rate is at the moment? I am talking about a negotiation—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) should take this problem a bit more seriously. I am talking about a negotiation to enter the European monetary system, out of which will come the proper rate that is best for British industry. But an exchange rate that moves from DM3·20 to DM2·60 and then to DM2·80 is not what British industry wants.

After 10½ years of this Government, after the £65 billion which the Government have had in oil revenues, £23 billion from privatisation sales and another £20 billion from land and other sales, after all the promises, all the claims, all the boasts that our problems would be solved, and after all the sacrifices that the people have made, people ask why it is Britain, not our competitors, that has the biggest trade gap, the worst inflation and the highest interest rates. What sort of transformation is it when we see inflation at 3 per cent. in Germany, 3·5 per cent. in France, 2 per cent. in Japan and moving towards 8 per cent. in Britain—higher than any of our major competitors? Yet it was Britain that was promised zero inflation by its Government.

After all these years, when we have had all these claims of an economic miracle, Germany is growing by 3 per cent., France by 3 per cent. and Japan by 4·5 per cent. this year, but we are lucky if we are growing by above 1 per cent. What is the excuse, when Germany has an interest rate of 8·5 per cent., France 11 per cent., Japan 7·5 per cent., but we in Britain still have 15 per cent., after months of sacrifices by millions of home owners hit by rising mortgages and thousands of small businesses squeezed by high interest rates? Yet it was Britain that was supposed to be enjoying an economic miracle. How, after 10 years, can we explain this failure?

I have here an important speech which was made last Tuesday but which the Government machine seems to have overlooked—a speech by the Leader of the House, made possible by the terms of his new position as deputy Prime Minister, which gives him the time, and indeed the solitude, in which to reflect on past errors. What does he say in this speech, in this barely audible voice from his

internal exile? What is he trying to tell us in this account of a day, or perhaps just an hour, in the life of Geoffrey Denisovich? He asks

"why, after 10 years, there are trade deficits."

He says:

We need to ask why in some very basic, low-tech fields, let alone high-tech ones, there are trade deficits that really do not need to exist."

Worse still, he presumes to answer with a confession: because we have paid insufficient attention to manufacturing industry. Manufacturing industry, he says, needs

"more priority, socially and economically".

He goes on:

"We need to place success in manufacturing higher on our national scale of priorities."

He says that manufacturing

"is an indispensable dynamo of a successful modern society."

He goes on to say that we need Britain

"enhancing its manufacturing fire power in every sector"

and that improvement in the manufacturing balance is

"a key part of the task ahead for the nation."

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): No doubt the hon. Gentleman is aware that manufacturing output has increased under this Government. Would he also confirm or deny that, during the course of the last Labour Government, manufacturing output fell?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that growth overall, taken year by year, on average was higher under the last Labour Government, even when we were faced with major oil problems. If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about telling the truth, let me remind him of what he said to his electorate in Amber Valley in 1987:

"The Conservative Government has put an end to fast rising prices once and for all.

I return to the speech of the deputy Prime Minister. In October, when he addressed the Conservative party conference he talked about the importance of manufacturing; in January, he criticised our manufacturing failures; now, in February, he calls for a manufacturing strategy to innovate, invest and internationalise.

Three times now, he has denied the Prime Minister, not a bit for the spot to be vacated by the Secretary of State for Wales, but a speech of penitence. The leading zealot of the first wave of the Thatcherite revolution is reappearing 10 years on as an embittered dissident. After some blinding revelation, there was an astonishing conversion somewhere on the road to Dorneywood. There is no longer an economic miracle, a supply-side transformation or a trade deficit of no consequence. After 10 years, there are no longer any answers from the deputy Prime Minister, there are no solutions, only questions. Where there was certainty, there is now confusion; where there were promises, there are now excuses; where there was truth, there is now admission of error; where there was hope, there is now disillusionment; and where there were answers, there are now only questions.

Where do the Government stand now, with the Secretary of State for Wales clearing his desk? The last remaining supporter of an industrial strategy in the Cabinet is now preparing to leave the Cabinet to spend more time with his family. The former Secretary of State for Employment called our training failure mind-boggling, and then quickly left to go back to his family. Now even the deputy Prime Minister is semi-detached. Who are left carrying the torch onwards? The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Prime Minister, the last two survivors of the glad, confident morning, are now the last devotees of a threadbare faith, the Darby and Joan of the last faltering months of the Thatcherite revolution tottering downwards towards the sunset and their inevitable fate. Yet those are the people who told us they had created an economic miracle.

What does the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry propose now? When the nation believes that he has gone too far, he is still seized of the view that he has not yet gone far enough. We should remember that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry came to his Department with something of a reputation as the author of what used to be called the flagship policy—the community charge—and as the Minister who advised the nation that if they wanted an alternative to tap water they should drink Perrier.

What does the right hon. Gentleman's Department propose when businesses are going bankrupt at a very fast rate; when there have been more redundancies and closures in the past weeks than in many years of the 1980s; when businesses are reeling from what the Government admit in official figures is a 67 per cent. increase in interest rate charges facing businesses, with winding-up petitions reported to the Lord Chancellor for the last quarter up by 46 per cent.; and on top of that, there is a long-term investment gap facing our country?

Even with North sea oil, we are investing a smaller share of our national income in ourselves than most of our competitors over a decade. The training gap has grown, with more young people leaving school early without qualifications. There are more people in our work force with no major qualifications. There is a research gap and a regional gap, with the economies of the north growing at half the rate of the economies of the south.

What does the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry propose? Instead of helping to bridge the regional gap, there will be a 26 per cent. cut in regional and industrial support, which will fall by £100 million to 1993. Instead of helping to bridge the innovation gap with our competitors, there will be a 4 per cent. cut in support for industry, including innovation, which will fall by £30 million to 1993. Instead of helping to bridge the research gap, there will be a 23 per cent. cut in general industrial collaborative projects, a 10 per cent. cut in advanced technology programmes, and a 3 per cent. cut in the research and technology organisation programmes. Instead of acting as a partner with industry to bridge those gaps with our competitors, there will be cuts in the Department of Trade and Industry budget totalling 27 per cent.

The right hon. Gentleman has been running down his responsibilities, with the ultimate goal of creating the first Department in British history devoted to doing absolutely nothing. Sunrise industries are looking in vain for help from that sunset Department, which is not so much open for business, in the language of his predecessor, as subject to a closing down sale.

We have a Secretary of State who believes genuinely that it will be better for industry when the last civil servant refuses the last export credit to the last struggling manufacturer in the land. It is the invisible hand guiding the invisible Department. It is not only a Department that does nothing but a Department with an ideological commitment that nothing shall be done. He is a Minister with more of a past, I am afraid, than a future. Nothing suggests the short-termism of his Department—

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The last thing I want to do is spend more time with my family —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Brown: I do not know whether that is a promise or a threat. With the experience of the Secretary of State for Wales and that of the last Secretary of State for Employment, I was beginning to believe, until the right hon. Gentleman spoke, that the Conservative party had become the party of the family.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is my hon. Friend aware that the people of Scotland would like the Secretary of State to spend more time with his family? Is he further aware that, in the working men's and unemployed people's clubs, the right hon. Gentleman is known as a Minister who works like two men, Laurel and Hardy?

Mr. Brown: If the Secretary of State wishes to stay on, I am sure that the electorate will shortly disappoint him. Nothing suggests the short-termism of his Department better than the right hon. Gentleman himself. Last year, it was the Water Bill. Next year we shall have the water colours. He is a Minister here today, his Department gone tomorrow. He is totally oblivious to the immediate problems that industry faces with high interest rates.

When the whole nation outside the Cabinet—and even the deputy Prime Minister, it seems, inside it—recognises that the trade deficit is a problem; when the consensus is that an industrial strategy is required; when the capacity of our industrial base is an issue causing increasing concern; when there is a clear need for a budget for industry; when the CBI is telling the Government to put investment before personal tax cuts; and when the Engineering Employers Federation and others have a joint budget submission demanding that attention be given to the problems of industry, our complaint against the Government is not just that they preside over the highest interest rates, the worst inflation and the biggest trade gap of our major competitors. It is not only that to have a consumer boom without adequate sustained long-term investment in our capacity was bound to be unsustainable and lead to the problems that we now face, sucking in imports, causing pressure on interest rates and creating inflationary bottlenecks. It is that, worst of all, the Government have no policy for Britain other than to repeat the mistakes that they have already made.

We are talking about a do-nothing Budget this year, a give-away Budget next year, another expansion of credit, another short-term consumer boom and another Lawson boom under a different name, but again, all without the necessary investment in training, research and capacity. It is a do-nothing year—merely an interval between making the mistakes and repeating them. We have a Government who do not respond to the economic cycle now but are dominated by the electoral cycle. When we need a Budget for skills, for technology and for investment to build for the future rather than to paper over the cracks of the present, our fear is that we shall be subjected to a Budget not to invest for the nation for tomorrow but simply to tide things over for the Tory party today.

Let us consider the problems that anybody charged with responsibility for the industries of this country should address—first, research and development. When Britain already spends only half as much a year on civil research as Germany and France, when we have half as many scientists pro rata in our work force as Japan and Germany, when market forces have clearly failed to produce the goods in the last 10 years, and yet when in Britain the Government are spending half what the Germans spend on innovation, with a smaller share of our national income being spent for that purpose than in France, Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands, what have the Government done?

The Government have abolished the micro-electronics support programme, the opto-electronics scheme and the single industry support schemes, they have cut support for innovation which, according to *The Engineer* magazine, has "fallen sharply" in electronics and in information technology, and even last year, they spent less than they promised to the House. They spent only £440 million instead of £510 million. There is less and less and less under this Government. If we could not succeed in many of the newest industries in the 1980s with minimal support, how are we to succeed in the new technologies of the 1990s with next to none?

The same is true of the regions. When unemployment rates in the north are still twice those of many regions in the south, when, even on the Government's own indicators, only 20 to 25 per cent. of the extra small businesses have come to the northern parts of the country, when only 30 per cent. of venture capital is coming to the north as well, and when high-technology employment has fallen in the regions, except Wales, what do the Government do? They cut spending further and further on regional development support. They even spent less last year than they said that they would in the published figures. They refuse to listen to the sensible demand coming from the regions that there be effective development agencies and enterprise boards to create new opportunities and technologies.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the hon. Gentleman solve a problem for me? He has mentioned regional development and regional aid. One way to establish that aid is to have an adequate road system. The Government have pledged themselves to improving our road system and the CBI has asked for that in its document "Trade Routes for the Future". The Government have adequately funded a road system programme, revolving over 10 years, at a cost of £12 billion. Why is it Labour party policy, as laid out by the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), to abandon the "crazy" road spending programme?

Mr. Brown: I fear that the hon. Gentleman deliberately seeks to misunderstand what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) says. My hon. Friend has drawn attention to yet another imbalance in the Conservative party's approach to the affairs of our nation. The Government refuse to invest in rail in the same way as they invest in roads. We want to achieve a proper balance in our infrastructure.

When I talk about the importance of regional policy, Conservative Members would do well to take into account the fact that railways are extremely important to the development of the regions, as is investment in new technologies and in training. We must ask ourselves whether the Germans are cutting their industry budget,

whether the French are cutting their export services or whether the Japanese are cutting support for new technologies.

Is it not the case that all those countries are investing in the future in a way that this Government, by abandoning the responsibilities that the Department of Trade and Industry has traditionally undertaken, are not doing? We need assurances today from the Secretary of State, and I hope that he will give me specific and precise answers to my questions.

Will the Secretary of State guarantee that regional policy is not to be further dismantled on the road to being abandoned? Will he assure us that support for innovation will be no worse than in Germany, Italy, France and our other European competitors? Will he tell us that Britain will secure its share of collaborative funds for research and development? Will he assure us that there will be no further rundown, rationalisation or privatisation of the Government's responsibilities to industry? Will he tell us that he will introduce no further export charges for advice and support, because they debilitate the attempt of industrialists to succeed in the export markets?

What of exports, so important to the future of this country? What of the new trading opportunities before us in eastern Europe? The Hungarians, the Poles, the East Germans and the Russians are asking for information technology and we send them the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). The East Germans ask for up-to-the-minute technical know-how and we send them the Earl of Trefgarne. The Poles and Hungarians are asking for farming technology and we are sending them the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Later this year, the Americans will give billions of dollars in new aid as part of a package. The French are buying into major enterprises, and the Germans are sending trade missions, often involving the whole boards of major companies. In the next few weeks, the British are sending them the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Is it not tragic that, just at the moment when we should be considering how to build trading links to last over the years, we seem more interested in exporting dogma than goods and services? Where we have deficits, not only with western Europe but with eastern Europe, surely it makes no sense to cut export services, to cut the Export Credits Guarantee Department, to cut many of the services that, traditionally, have been performed by the Department of Trade and Industry, and to charge businesses that can ill afford to pay because of high interest rates.

At the end of almost 11 years of this Conservative Government, the best that we can hope for is that inflation will fall to about 6 per cent. at the end of the year—although the Government used to promise that it would come down to zero. The best that we can hope for is a trade deficit which, we understand from official figures, will be about £15 billion—something unheard of before this Government came to power. The best that we can hope for is that interest rates will slip down by 1 or 2 per cent.—but they will still remain the highest among our major European competitors.

During these past 11 years, the Government have failed even to address the long-term problems that they claimed to have conquered during the first five-years. They have squandered £65 billion of oil revenues with no thought of tomorrow. That is the meaning of short-termism.

What will be their excuses now? They cannot say that they need more time, because they have already had 10½ years. They cannot say that markets alone will deliver the goods, because for 10½ years they have not. They cannot say that they are the victims of international economic problems, because our competitors have had to face the same problems and many have done better. They cannot blame the burdens of interventionism, because it is lower in Britain than in other countries. They cannot blame an over-regulated labour market, because they claim to have led the way in deregulation.

Who is left to blame—the Churches, Brian Redhead, the left-over intellectuals of the 1960s, the Archbishop of Canterbury or the West Oxfordshire Eighteen? The truth is that, having blamed everyone else, the Government have no one left to blame but themselves.

Our complaint is not simply that, for more than 10 years, the Government have been unfair and unjust—charges that may not especially concern them; it is that, on the economic issues, on which they asked us to judge them and for which all the sacrifices have been made, they have been hopelessly inefficient and terminally incompetent. All that is left are the short-term electoral expediencies of short-term Ministers in a Cabinet dominated by 10 years of short-termism—thankfully, with only a short term to go. They are running out of oil, they have run out of ideas and they have even run out of excuses. Now time is running out for them.

4.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on policies which have achieved the highest rate of economic growth in the European Community, the largest increase in manufacturing productivity of any major industrial country, and record levels of industrial output, investment and exports; welcomes the continuous fall in unemployment for 42 months, and the creation since 1983 of nearly three million jobs in the United Kingdom; and commends the resolve of Her Majesty's Government to bear down on inflation and to continue with the supply side policies which have contributed to these achievements."

I rather enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). It was a good Dunfermline high school debating society effort, but it did not contain a grain of Labour party policy. I advise the hon. Gentleman to spend more time with his family, because he is wasting it here. His ignorance was demonstrated by the advance notice of today's debate which he tabled last week, in which he referred to the balance of payments deficit. He should know that payments balance, so there cannot be a deficit on the balance of payments.

The hon. Gentleman based the debate on one month's trade figures. How often has it been said by Ministers of all parties that one month's figures are of little value as an indicator of trade performance? It is the trend that matters. The total value of our overseas trade each month —visible and invisible—is about £35 billion. So purely random movements of 2 or 3 per cent., which are common, can move one month's current account balance either way by many hundreds of millions of pounds. These random movements tend to cancel each other out over a long period, which is why it is the trend that matters.

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

Moreover, single consignments can distort a whole month's figures. The hon. Gentleman referred to the erratics. I think that he got it right: the quotation from the dictionary referred to geological oddities of a bygone age. Curiously enough, in this case they are. They are diamonds which are re-exported at considerable profit to the country. In January, 400 million-odd were imported.

The monthly figures, which cause the hon. Gentleman such glee when poor figures are first published, are subject to considerable revision when more complete information becomes available. For example, the originally published December deficit of £1,100 million, which we regarded as unnaturally low at the time, has now been revised down to £800 million. Perhaps that will convince the hon. Gentleman of the folly of constructing an elaborate edifice on one month's figures. He is keen to run Britain down when the figures appear bad, but he is not to be seen anywhere when they are revised upwards and show a better picture.

I return to the trend, which is healthy. Export volume in the last three months, excluding oil and erratics, was 4 per cent. higher than in the previous three months, while import volume was 1 per cent. lower. Compared with a year earlier, there is an even more striking result: export volume is up by 11 per cent. and import volume is up by only 2 per cent. There is no doubt, on the basis of those figures, which the hon. Gentleman is not listening to, that the trend of both exports and imports, including the January figures, is firmly in the right direction.

The Opposition may not like it if I give too much good news, but the value of our visible exports in 1989 was 14·4 per cent. higher than in 1988. Among the high spots were a 95 per cent. increase in exports of telecommunications equipment to the United States and a 75 per cent. increase in exports of road vehicles to Japan, to more than £150 million last year. That is a turnabout. Exports of road vehicles to all destinations increased by 33 per cent. Exports of iron and steel since privatisation rose in value by 36 per cent. My right hon. and hon. Friends will note with satisfaction that excellent evidence of rapid recovery in three major industries which were mutilated by the interventionist policies of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) in the 1970s.

I fear that I have to disappoint the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The figures that my right hon. Friend has given of the improving trend of exports as against the fairly static level of imports surely justify the conclusion that the country had a problem not because of competitiveness but because of the surge in demand domestically. Therefore, that entirely justifies the Government's policy of increasing the cost of money to bear down on demand.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right, unlike the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. The problem is that, great though the increase in production is, the surge in demand has overtaken it.

I fear that there is more good news. It looks as if the encouraging trends will continue, both in exports and in imports. In 1989, our exporters almost certainly increased their share of world trade, despite what the hon. Gentleman alleged. The prospects are good for expansion of the volume of world trade itself. The Industry Act forecast last November predicted that the volume of world trade would expand at the healthy rate of 5 per cent. in 1990, with the volume of world trade in manufactures expanding at 6·5 per cent. If our exporters maintain or increase their share of world markets, as they are doing, that will mean further healthy export growth. Export order books are good and are growing. Export opportunities will grow even more rapidly if we have a successful conclusion to the Uruguay GATT round, a topic which the hon. Gentleman has never mentioned. I do not think that he even knows about it.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): When the Government came to power, there was a balance in manufacturing between exports and imports. In 1989 there was a £17 billion deficit. How does the right hon. Gentleman explain that? Does it matter? If it does, what is he doing about it?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman missed the fact that, in the early 1980s there was a considerable surplus. For one of the very few times in our history, we had a surplus of visible trade, excluding oil. These matters go up and down according to the success of industry, and we can now see the growing success of British industry which I have described.

Against those successes, and against the huge opportunities for us to trade in the world, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East excelled himself in an article in *The Mail on Sunday* 10 days ago. He said that the solution for us all was to rush to eastern Europe and supply British high-quality consumer goods to the inhabitants of those poor countries so recently delivered from Socialism.

My first question is, why has Socialism not already delivered the goods? Surely it should have been supplying everyone with all the lovely products resulting from state intervention, state investment banks, nationalisation and national plans. The best thing for the hon. Gentleman to do is to hope that we will all forget that eastern Europe adopted the very policies that he advocates. If hon. Members want to see planning in action, they should go and stand in a bread queue in Bucharest, or put their names down for a telephone in Warsaw. Then they will see the results of policies like those of the Labour party.

The hon. Gentleman had the grace to admit in that article that east Europeans have no hard currency to pay for our goods—another first for Socialist economics. But he had an answer for that, too: it came to him in a flash of inspiration—barter. They could pay in radishes and raspberries, sauerkraut and slivovitz.

We have been trying to do barter trade with the eastern bloc for 20 years, which is why our trade with all those countries amounts to less than 2 per cent. Is that really all that the hon. Gentleman can suggest—to go back to the mediaeval system of barter, with failed Socialist economies? Or is it a forlorn attempt by him to exonerate the failure of Socialism in eastern Europe? I know that he does not like it, but he might as well take it. Those of us who have been here for a few years remember Lord Callaghan telling us in 1960:

"I have not the slightest doubt that the economic measures and the Socialist measures which one will find in countries of Eastern Europe, will become increasingly powerful against the uncoordinated, planless society in which the West is living at present."—

[Interruption.] As some hon. Members were shouting and may not have heard that, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will repeat it:

"I have not the slightest doubt that the economic measures and the Socialist measures which one will find in countries of Eastern Europe, will become increasingly powerful against the uncoordinated, planless society in which the West is living at present."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1960, Vol. 632, c. 679.]

The noble Lord has become an older, wiser man. I hope that he will teach the hon. Gentleman the lesson that people in eastern Europe have learnt: Socialist economic policy results in economic disaster.

Our efforts here are directed towards helping the economies of eastern Europe to move towards a proper market system based on hard currency, private ownership, no plans, no intervention, and proper market pricing. The way for us to help is through major private investment. This is the message that my Ministers and I shall take to eastern Europe in our travels, and we shall be taking teams of senior business men with us to show how British industry can provide the practical help that Eastern Europe needs. Barter, my foot!

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): If the Secretary of State is advocating no plans, no intervention and plenty of investment, can he explain why his Department and unelected officials in Brussels have, between them, refused to allow entirely private investors to buy shipyards in Sunderland so that they might build ships that are required and for which there are orders? These people are themselves shipowners and would require no state subsidy whatsoever. Will the Secretary of State explain why his Department intervenes only to prevent people in the private sector from investing in shipbuilding in Sunderland?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should address that question to the European Commission, which, quite rightly, seeks to enforce the agreement with us to make it possible to aid the hon. Gentleman's constituency through the enterprise zone and many other measures. These measures have been of far more value than would be the enterprise with which the Commission insists we do not proceed.

As I have said already, the trade deficit is the result of demand in the economy being in excess of productive capacity. Measures taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to curb excessive demand are working. This is clear from the trend in retail sales and in house prices. The slackening of demand is already reducing the growth of imports, and will continue to do so. The Industry Act forecast predicted that 1990 would see a continued fall in the rate of import growth. That, too, is being borne out. Industry is expanding and will have room to export more.

The trade deficit is still too high—there is no argument about that. But the deficit, high though it is, is not a sign of industrial weakness; it has arisen because demand has been growing even faster than production. Because they love to knock British industry, the Opposition, in the face of the evidence, cling to the allegations that the deficit is the result of weakness on the part of our industry.

So how is our "unco-ordinated, planless" industry doing? Manufacturing output is at record levels. Since 1981 it has risen by 32 per cent., not the 17 per cent. that has been quoted. In the period 1986-89, the volume of manufacturing output alone increased by 19 per cent. That is not evidence of manufacturing decline. Nor do I take any lessons on the subject from the representative of a party whose last period of office saw an actual fall in the volume of manufacturing output.

Productivity in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom has risen by almost 60 per cent. since 1980. That represents a rate of growth unmatched by any of our major industrial competitors, and certainly unmatched by any planned or co-ordinated Socialist Government anywhere. It is in sharp contrast with our record in the previous 20 years, when we were at the bottom of the league table for manufacturing productivity growth. In the early 1980s, there was an overdue correction of the heavy overmanning that had been brought about with the encouragement of the Labour Government, but in recent years a continuing strong improvement in productivity has gone hand in hand with an expansion of production. Could any of the credit for this be due to the Government's supply-side policies?

Mr. Graham: When the Secretary of State goes to eastern Europe, will he tell the regimes there that half of Scotland has lost more than half its manufacturing jobs since this Government came to power in 1979? In Strathclyde alone, more than 166,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost under the jurisdiction of this Government. That is an indication of the planning that will denude Scotland further and further until it is just one big estate for game hunting by the rich.

Mr. Ridley: I think that if I were to tell, say, the Poles what the hon. Gentleman has asked me to tell people in eastern Europe, they would be rather shocked. It is likely that the rates paid to people in Scotland who are on benefit are higher than the industrial wages paid to many people in Poland. The hon. Gentleman has no idea how lucky he is. Unemployment in Scotland is very low compared with previous figures, simply because so many new jobs have been created. *[Interruption.]* I did not say that. I said that those on benefit are probably better off than people in Poland who are in full-time work.

The decline in the profitability of industry through the 1970s was both a symptom and a cause of its difficulties. That trend has been decisively reversed. By 1987—the most recent year for which firm figures are available—the rate of return in manufacturing had recovered from 4 to 8 per cent. There is little doubt that it has risen further since, and it now stands at a level not seen since the 1960s. This enables three quarters of the funds for capital investment to be found from internal resources, thus enabling companies to invest despite high interest rates. Good profits help firms to raise more money through the stock market for investment.

The "unco-ordinated, planless" industry that we have has also had record investment. Opposition Members always lay great stress on investment. I suspect that the volume of investment is often of less significance than its quality and the efficiency with which it is exploited. Nevertheless, investment trends are also very encouraging. In the last seven years the growth of investment in the economy as a whole will have been twice as fast as the growth in consumption. Business investment has grown by 40 per cent. in the last three years alone. Manufacturing investment grew by 12 per cent. in 1988 and by 5·5 per cent. in 1989, and now stands at a record level. It takes a considerable amount of misplaced ingenuity to portray that record as failure.

[Mr. Ridley]

The result has been a revival of industrial prosperity across the whole country. Unemployment has fallen for 42 consecutive months, and now stands at only two thirds of the European Community average.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I know that these figures are not popular with the Opposition, but they had better listen to the truth. Unemployment has fallen for 42 consecutive months, and now stands at only two thirds of the European Community average. It has fallen sharply in every region. We have the highest level of employment in our history —26·5 million people in jobs. Is the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East ashamed of our success in helping his constituents to a better life? The largest percentage falls in unemployment in the past year have been in Scotland, Wales and the North.

Since March 1986, the combined unemployment rate in the north-east, the north-west, and Yorkshire and Humberside has almost halved—from 15·9 to 8·4 per cent. In Dunfermline, the unemployment rate has fallen from a high of 17·7 per cent. to the present figure of 10·1 per cent. Why did not the hon. Gentleman mention that to his constituents in the tear-jerking account of his hard-working week that was published in *The Guardian* on 3 March? We all felt particularly sorry that he had to catch the 7.30 train to Newcastle—a train on which I travel frequently. I am sorry that he was so inconvenienced by having to make a speech there.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I acknowledge that unemployment has fallen over the past 42 months. Nevertheless, in all the standard planning regions north of the line from the Severn to the Wash, over 660,000 fewer men are employed today than in 1979, and in Wales 60,000 more men are out of a job. Is not that a sad comment on the current state of affairs? There is a huge disparity in the development of the economy: there are 305,000 extra jobs for men in the south-east, and 660,000 more men unemployed in the north and west.

Mr. Ridley: I cannot confirm all the hon. Gentleman's figures off the top of my head, but I believe that unemployment in Wales alone has fallen by 23 per cent. over the past year. What the hon. Gentleman has drawn to our attention is the migration from the north, Scotland and Wales to the south that has taken place over the past few years. I hope that that trend is now reversing; I believe that it is.

The Government's policies are spreading prosperity across the nation. That is why the old arguments about the north-south divide are heard so seldom now, except when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East tries to keep them alive. The truth directly contradicts what he said: the north is now experiencing faster economic growth than the south, and doing better than the south.

The story is of record increases in production, productivity, exports, profits, investment and employment. Of course there is more to do, but the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East ought to first acknowledge that the 1980s have probably been the best years for British industry since the 1880s. He prefers to go on griping, however.

Labour says that there is not enough training and not enough investment, and that too little is spent on research and development. The hon. Gentleman asked about research and development: let me give him the details for 1987, the most recent year for which I have figures. As a percentage of gross national product, private sector investment in research and development was 1·8 per cent. in West Germany, 1·9 per cent. in Japan 1·1 per cent. in the United Kingdom and 0·9 per cent. in France. The hon. Gentleman got the figures wrong; our investment is not less than half that of Germany, and it is more than that of France. Of course the investors could do better, but this is not a poor performance.

The hon. Gentleman complained that there are too many takeovers, and that industry suffers from short-termism. It is the Labour party which is suffering from short-termism; it wants to take advantage of any quick trick that it can find to fill up a Supply day debate. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need to continue carrying out our task of improving the country's record of training. He ought to know that the Government are setting up training and enterprise councils to improve training—involving expenditure of some £2·5 billion a year—but he did not mention it.

Foreign investors know what a favourable climate the United Kingdom provides for manufacturing enterprise. In the past 12 months, major new investments have been announced by Bosch, Toyota and Fujitsu. Digital Equipment has expanded its operations in the north and in Scotland; Reinhagen of West Germany has invested in Coventry, Murata of Japan in Plymouth and Koyo Seiko of Japan in Barnsley. Nearly 40 per cent. of United States investment in the Community, and one third of Japanese investment, comes to Britain. West German firms have invested more in the United Kingdom than in any other Community country. Inward industrial investment is running at a rate of £4·5 billion a year. There is the evidence that industry thrives on Britain's "uncoordinated, planless" environment. If it is good enough for Japanese, Germans and Americans to invest and manufacture here, why is it not good enough for the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East?

Inward investment has had other benefits for the British economy. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not acknowledged them, but I was heartened by an article by Victor Keegan in *The Guardian* last week, which spelled out the success of such investment. I agreed particularly with Mr. Keegan's point that overseas production and managerial techniques had had a catalytic effect on British industry. There can be no doubt that foreign investment is leading to improved product quality and management in British industry.

The motion refers to interest rates. Of course high interest rates are unwelcome to private borrowers; of course they have an impact. Their purpose is to make saving more attractive and borrowing less so, and thus to reduce the pressure of the excess demand that was properly identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, not now.

Inflation is by far the greater evil, and it is absolutely right for us to place its defeat at the top of the agenda. The

main impact of high interest rates is on people with mortgages. I sympathise with them, for I know how difficult things are for them.

Mr. Allen: Do you?

Mr. Ridley: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why so many Labour councils have chosen such a difficult moment to impose such extravagantly high community charges? If the Labour movement cared anything for the people who are suffering from the high mortgage rates, it would have done its utmost to moderate the charges rather than stoking up the problem.

We should not exaggerate the effect of interest rates on business. First, it is less the cost of borrowing than the availability of attractive investment opportunities that determines the scale of new investment. When investments yield returns of 25 to 30 per cent., as some do, borrowing at 10 to 15 per cent. still makes good sense. Secondly, while short-term and variable interest rates have risen sharply, interest rates for fixed-rate finance at medium and long term remain substantially lower. That is often the form of finance best suited to the needs of a manufacturing enterprise.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, I will not.

Finally, the cost of interest rates must be set against other business costs. On average, the cost of a 1 per cent. rise in interest rates is far lower than that of a 1 per cent. pay increase, but I have not noticed the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and his hon. Friends protesting at some of the excessive wage demands made recently by their friends in the trade union movement; nor do I entirely understand why the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions is determined to push through high wage claims if it is worried about the effect of high interest rates on business.

The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues persist in the belief that there is some other, painless way of controlling inflation. I am glad to see that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is present: although I may not list all his silly ideas about controlling credit, I shall pay him the compliment of quoting his suggestion that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor should appeal to the banks' sense of civic responsibility in an attempt to limit undesirable lending.

If the Government feel that they must intervene in the economic life of the country, surely they should do so overtly, through legislation that will be subject to the scrutiny of the House. It is no good lecturing people. I cannot believe that homilies from my right hon. Friend, or any other Minister, on the virtues of abstinence will be treated like tablets of stone in company boardrooms. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East may think that lecturing business men over breakfast goes down well, but precious few of them tell me that they want directions from Whitehall on how to run their affairs.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman also propose to appeal to the civil responsibility of lenders in Germany, the United States, Japan, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands? Does he intend to preach to them about undesirable lending? No doubt they would take up any business lost by British lenders who were foolish enough to listen.

It is time to jettison all those ideas, just as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has firmly jettisoned the silly ideas put forward by his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). What has happened to Labour's plans for a payroll tax, which threatened British industry with an extra £1 billion tax bill? What has happened to Labour's plans for a co-ordinated, planned British investment bank and a range of regional and local investment banks? I am quoting from Labour's policy review. What has happened to the no-dividend policy for utilities?

Will the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East tell the House now, because he did not tell us in his speech? None of those policies is mentioned in Labour's recent "Industry 2000" document. As the hon. Gentleman seems shy of talking about his own policies, I shall tell his right hon. and hon. Friends why there is no mention of them—it is because he has ditched them. If he had not, he would tell us about them. I am willing to give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wants to say that he has not ditched those policies. I have answered lots of questions, so will the hon. Gentleman now be kind enough to answer just one? What has happened to the economic and industrial policies advocated that his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham put before the nation? Has the hon. Gentleman ditched them or not? It seems that we cannot even have an answer to that question.

Mr. Roger King: My right hon. Friend knows that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) allowed me to intervene in his speech, for which I am most grateful. I asked him about the Labour party's roads programme and about the commitment that has been given by his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that that programme for that essential part of the United Kingdom's infrastructure is regarded by the Opposition as so important to our economic viability that they would scrap it. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that they did not mean any such thing. I refer my right hon. Friend to the fact that on 14 February the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said:

"We would not follow the crazy road programme that the Government have embarked upon." [*Official Report*, 14 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 300.]

Does my right hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members are putting forward a recipe for disaster, congestion and economic bankruptcy?

Mr. Ridley: The role of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East in these matters is to run along behind his colleagues with a blanket. Whenever any shadow Minister makes a policy commitment, the hon. Gentleman runs along to deny it. He hides it by drawing the blanket over it. The Opposition have to move the hon. Gentleman around every few months so that he can clear up all the messes left by his colleagues. That applies equally to his hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for Dagenham.

Perhaps the shadow Chancellor will tell us what has happened to the payroll tax. He should know. Is it still Labour party policy? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman please tell us the solutions?—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] The Opposition are long on diagnosis, but short on prognosis. I have only one question. Have the measures outlined in Labour's policy review been ditched or not? Just yes or no—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] I

[Mr. Ridley]

rest my case. Indeed, I have no case to answer, because no alternative strategy has been put forward. I commend the Government's amendment to the House.

5.12 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): After that speech, the only people with any reason to hope are the Secretary of State's family. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) once said that the Secretary of State is the most brilliant Minister in the Government. I remember commenting then, when I looked at the official Box, that even the men in the white coats were laughing. Today they would have been in tears.

Today we have heard the wisdom of Ridley—that there is no deficit and that if we ignore it, it will go away because it is an illusion. He said that there can be no such thing as a deficit on the balance of payments. Believe it or not, the person sitting on the Treasury Bench performing his mimicry at the Dispatch Box is what passes as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in this Government. It is no wonder that we have such problems and no wonder that the solutions are all irrelevant.

To listen to the Secretary of State one would think that he had invented inward investment. He forgets that 15 per cent. of British industry and commerce was overseas-owned in the 1970s and that traditionally we have been a host country for inward investment. We have always welcomed it. With my colleagues in government at the time, I negotiated to bring Hitachi to Bridgend and Aberdare, Toshiba to Cornwall and Aiwa. All those negotiations were carried out under that Labour Administration and others were carried out by previous Conservative Administrations. All Governments have welcomed inward investment, and the Secretary of State should not try to create the impression that it has arisen only since 1979.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): When in our history has inward investment been as high as it is today?

Mr. Williams: I am coming to that point. On the eve of 1992 and just after big bang, of course, there is an influx of investment throughout Europe—not just into this country. I shall come to that point in a little while. Much though I am tempted by the right hon. Gentleman's trivialisation of everything, which tends to bring out the worst in us, I shall not respond like that because the subject is too serious for us to talk in those terms. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about needing to look at the trend. He is absolutely right—I wish that he had. That is what I should like to do. I wait to get away from the knockabout rubbish to which we had to listen for almost half an hour and put the debate into a different and, I hope, wider context.

Like most hon. Members of all parties—even if Conservative Members will not admit it—I sincerely believe that there is an underlying, long-term, profound structural imbalance in this country. In part, it is buried by the political trivia that we bandy among the different parties, but it has also been submerged in the short-lived smokescreen of the oil revenues of the past decade. However, even with the £128 billion revenue from oil, ominously we still have a deficit of £20 billion over the decade as a whole.

We must remember that the problem is not just today's problem. It is an underlying one. I do not want to tempt the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who I am sure will want to make his own speech later, but he will recollect trying to grapple in the 1970s with exactly the problem that we are talking about today. We have had an underlying imbalance in British trade since the end of the second world war. In only three years in the period 1948 to 1974 has Britain managed to achieve a surplus in visible trade. The surpluses that we traditionally earn from manufactures were normally outweighed by the import of raw materials because at that stage Britain's only raw material was coal and we were importing up to half our foodstuffs. That imbalance stretches back even to before the last war and into the last century, when we were the workshop of the world. Our balance of payments has always been held by invisibles. It is important to establish that point.

It was because of the erosion of those invisibles during the war—when our shipping ended up at the bottom of the Atlantic and our overseas investments had to be sold to buy food and armaments—that since the war various Administrations have wrestled with the problems of the balance of payments—except for that one short transitory period of oil revenues. Since the war we have been dogged by the consequences of that problem—the old stop-go syndrome of which we are all well aware. It is because oil has blurred our perception of the British malaise for 17 years that the Secretary of State did not address that problem properly today.

From 1973, when OPEC began its fivefold increase in oil prices, the perception of the problem changed. Suddenly everything was good because our oil started to flow. During the 1980s all of us, or at least Conservative Members and too many people in the country, wallowed in a false sense of security. The flow of oil from the North sea—£128 billion-worth of it—is a short-term finite asset. It conceals the long-term underlying weakness in Britain's trading economy. That weakness has been made worse—but again concealed by the oil—by the 20 per cent. destruction of the manufacturing base by the end of the 1970s. That it was easily concealed by glib Ministers.

Throughout the decade, the impact of the underlying trade weakness has worsened. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said, the manufacturing surplus of almost £3 billion in 1979—in current terms it would be over £5 billion—has deteriorated into a £16 billion deficit now. That is a turnround on the manufacturing trading account of £21 billion.

In the 1980s, the oil flow produced a genuine difference of political opinion about how the resource should be used. A clear division was already emerging before the 1979 election. I remember the debates before the election on industry, policy and so on. Labour Members had a different view of what we should do with the bonanza, the short-term finite resource that would become available to us. Our view was embodied in the industrial strategy, which was anathema to Conservative Members. The concept was simple. It was that we should take that short-term, limited resource out of the North sea and use it to invest in manufacturing, new technology, education

and training to prepare ourselves for when the oil was no longer there. Conservative Members may have disagreed with it, but they understood it clearly.

The Government's strategy was different. They believed that, traditionally, invisibles had held the balance and that invisibles could do it again. They believed that manufacturing could be ignored. I remember the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury accusing us of being dewy-eyed about manufacturing. He would not dare to make that statement today.

The Government made a legitimate but wrong-headed decision to rebuild invisible trade rather than build the physical capability to produce and sell goods. They removed exchange controls. I shall not enter into that argument, because it was simply a means to an end. The outcome of the Government's strategy was that, during the oil decade, there was a net outflow from Britain of £41 billion. Some of it went in loans and some in hard, direct investment. At the end of 10 years of pursuing that strategy, one simple arithmetical fact remains: the extra revenue from outward investments—the invisibles at the heart of the Government's strategy—are not enough to cover the drop of £21 billion in manufacturing trade. We have a gap which did not exist before.

Until this Government came to power, traditionally we had surpluses on manufacturing. The deficits were on raw materials and foodstuffs. We had surpluses on invisibles and manufacturing. Now we have a surplus only on invisibles, which is not enough.

If the Secretary of State had remained to listen to the next speech, which is the usual courtesy in the House——

Mrs. Mahon: He is not a courteous man.

Mr. Williams: I recognise that he is not noted for it.

The Secretary of State may say that there was direct outward investment to build factories and secure markets. The direct inward investment about which the Government boast is only half the amount of our direct outward investment. We have created factories, capacity and jobs in other countries at double the rate at which other countries have used their resources to create jobs and capacity in our country.

One must bear it in mind that the aim of direct outward investment is often to secure a market overseas—for example, in Australia. Once a company has found a good market, it is understandable that it may want to secure it by investing in a local plant. That is clear industrial logic, but we must understand the consequence. There is an outflow of capital. We lose exports because goods are produced locally. We lose jobs because they are not needed here. We probably lose the profits too, because, unfortunately, British companies do not do what the Government say they should do. They do not repatriate profits to provide the invisibles to pay for the deficit on real goods—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members want to sit there and chunter, that is up to them. They are welcome to intervene.

Mr. Ian Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): There is some inconsistency in what the hon. Gentleman says. Labour Members constantly preach that in Europe there are not enough level playing fields to allow British capital to take over European companies. The hon. Gentleman sounds as though he is not interested in that process.

Mr. Williams: I was pointing out that overseas investment makes sense in many circumstances. The basic strategy deliberately adopted by the Government—the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was party to the decision—was to ignore the industrial side and concentrate entirely on invisible overseas investment as a way of securing the future balance of payments. They ignored the enormous impact that will be felt when oil eventually runs out.

As oil runs out and the revenue from it falls, we shall return to the stop-go process and our invisibles will clearly be incapable of fulfilling their traditional role. They cannot offset the enormous deficit on visible trade. We shall return to stop-go, but not with a balance of payments surplus like the last time. We shall return to the stop-go process with a £20 billion deficit on payments. We shall return to stop-go awash with hot money. We are so awash with hot money that a mere blip—to use the Government's word—a few weeks ago caused £3 billion to flow out across the foreign exchanges and as a result we had to support the currency.

The Government are in a political quandary. It happens to be an unfortunate time in the electoral calendar and the Government need growth before the next election. So we have the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister like two first world war generals planning another dash at the wire, another dash for growth. They hope that the dash will carry them through the election and they can bury the dead on the other side. Whichever side of the House makes up the stretcher party after that election and dash for growth will have dramatic problems with which to contend.

But today's overriding question goes beyond that. With a record balance of payments deficit, historically high interest rates and so much hot money washing about in the economy, will the Government even get as far as the wire?

5.30 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has done us all a service. His speech was thoughtful and comprehensive, embracing a coherent strategy on how to attempt to run an economy. To paraphrase what he said, there was the once-and-for-all bonanza of North sea oil and "we"—I assume he meant the Government of which he hopes to be a member—will be able to use that money for a once-and-for-all investment process for the greater benefit of the British people. That shows the difference between the Opposition and the Government. The weakness in the Opposition's case is that they have no idea how to use the money, which they would have confiscated through high taxes from the people who had extracted the oil from the North sea.

It is precisely because Governments the world over do not have the sophisticated mechanisms for investing money for profit that the system described by the right hon. Gentleman does not work. Socialism fails because it misuses resources in its hand. It is the marketplace that finds the probable investments, and that is what the Labour Government, had they been in power, would have denied—the proper effective disposition of resources.

[Mr. Michael Heseltine]

The seriousness of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, with the conclusions of which I wholly disagree, was in stark contrast with what I think he described as the "knockabout rubbish" of the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)—which was funny. By any standards in the House, it was extraordinarily funny, and the better the jokes, the more apparent it became that he had absolutely no policy contributions to make. If this country wants to be run on the basis of inspired humour and the odd wit of Opposition Members, it has today seen what lies over the edge of the abyss.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was quite specific about what he wanted to do. He wanted to introduce a Budget for investment to bring down interest rates. We were led to understand that that commitment was at the top of his list of priorities. He did not tell us what the Budget would contain to bring down interest rates. Bringing down interest rates would mean cutting the level of demand in the economy. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor eloquently put it, "If it ain't hurting, it ain't working." The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not say where he would impose the pain necessary to get a grip on inflation.

The hon. Gentleman then moved on to the second broad sweep of policy. I wholly agree with many of the sentiments he expressed, but then, all hon. Members would broadly agree with them. He argued for more education, training and research and development. He would be the first to say that those are essentially long-term policies. It is no use thinking that, if we say that we are going to put £1 billion into education, the kids will be in the factories within 24 hours, changing the nature of the performance of British industry. It is a long-term policy. With research and development, we must start with a gleam in the eye, work through to the application and then the product emerges.

Mr. Gordon Brown *indicated assent.*

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is generous enough to agree with me.

With training, we have to start the process, find people to do the training and set up the facilities, and, in five to 10 years, we will probably get a greater output of trained people. The hon. Gentleman and I are at one on that, but there is a lacuna in his argument. If, when he and his party were in power, they were doing all the training, education and investing in research and development, why did the economy fall apart when they left power? We should have been the beneficiaries and inheritors of that great legacy, but they had done none of those things.

The third, and by no means the worst, item of the hon. Gentleman's agenda for change is regional policy. If I understood him correctly, the implications of his speech were that the northern parts of our economy work less effectively than the southern parts, and a little bit of subsidy here from central Government to stimulate a little bit of job creation there, will change things in a way that all Governments since the war have failed to do. However, there is a small problem for the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Allen: The right hon. Gentleman tried it when he was Secretary of State.

Mr. Heseltine: No. The hon. Gentleman says that we tried it. The Labour Government did something quite different. In their regional policy, they spent a few hundred million pounds from the centre to the regions while they took billions of pounds from the regions in the south-east in one form of subsidy or another to the City of London and the pension funds.

What do the Opposition think they achieved with the capital gains tax that destroyed the family businesses of the north? What do they think they achieved when they subsidised pension funds to take the money out of the wealth-creating companies to institutionalise them in the City of London? What did they think they achieved when they gave the publicly quoted companies of the south of England the privilege of taking over the businesses in the midlands and the north with tax incentives? Where did the power go from? From the north. Where did the power go to? To the south. When the communications explosion of the 1980s took place, where did it take place? Where the head offices were. Where were they? Down here. Why? Because they had been driven out of all parts of peripheral Britain by the Labour party. That is what has happened.

The fourth argument of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—his cri de coeur to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—was, "Give me this one hope." The hon. Gentleman's message was, "Let there be no more restructuring of British industry." I have heard that before. That was the essence of nationalisation—remove the industry from the initial owners, subsidise it, protect it, prevent it from being changed, do not let it diversify, ossify the economies around the country's periphery, and then expect those economies to compete.

That is what the hon. Member and his party achieved. When the market winds blew, the subsidised, nationalised industries were the first to shed the horrendous number of jobs which, if they had been changed and diversified when the economy was prosperous and growing, would have resulted in much less pain and much more benefit. It took the Conservative party to face up to that, and it is because the Opposition have learnt nothing that they must remain what the hon. Gentleman made them today—an eloquent, uproarious joke, fit for opposition but not for government. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Jaguar?"] Hon. Members know it has already been sold to the Americans.

I wish to speak about the central issue to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry referred—the battle against inflation. Conservative Members understand that that is the battle we must win. I am grateful that the Chancellor is here today. He and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should seriously consider the first act of nationalisation in the post-war world—the nationalisation of the Bank of England. The Government have achieved wonders by working back through the corridors of history and privatising most of the major nationalised industries. It is curious that we did not concentrate on the first act of nationalisation, that of the Bank of England. We all know that it cannot be privatised, but there is every conceivable reason why we should seek to distance the Bank of England from its current relationship with the Government.

I say that for two reasons. First, the battle for inflation is an institutional and a psychological battle. It is of critical importance that the people, the politicians and the wage negotiators of a country know what is the overriding priority of a nation, and that has to be the battle against

inflation. If, as with the German, American and Swiss banks, the central bank is distanced from the Government, everybody knows that the only way in which politicians can change the influences on the value of money is by direct and open direction through a bank that is likely to resist it. That is a huge sanction. There would be no diminution in the sovereignty of the House, because it would be easier for the House to detect the process that was at work, and the power built into the central governor's position would have a major stabilising impact in the direction that I have described.

Secondly, whatever one might consider to be the likely effects of German unification, we are moving, driven by treaty, towards the completion of the single European market. One of the major benefits of that market is not just the removal of the structural inhibitions between the 12 countries: it is the enhanced confidence that can come from the investment profile of a much larger and more stable home market, a market that enables Britain, within a partnership of Europe, to stand on all fours with the United States or Japan. One method of achieving that is to obtain a degree of monetary stability in the wider market place.

The debate is increasingly becoming one of sovereignty, and there are no ways in which, in logic and in the ultimate, that issue can be avoided. But in the first stages towards a more co-ordinated market, the European monetary system and the disciplines of the exchange rate mechanism, no unacceptable loss of sovereignty is involved in moving into such a mechanism. But one would preserve that sense of national independence if we saw it happening coincidentally with the establishment of a central independent bank in Britain.

We should suggest to our European partners that they should all establish independent central banks on the same model as the Bundesbank, operating to the disciplines of the Bundesbank. Let us have no illusions about that: the disciplines of the Bundesbank are precisely those to which we are all committed. It is precisely because it has been so successful, and the deutschmark so powerful, that all of us recognise that either it will make it on its own, dominating the European economic marketplace, or there will be some arrangement within which we conduct a dialogue; in other words, we have access to the top table.

A way in which that could be achieved without loss of national sovereignty would be if an independent team of bankers, operating to the same disciplines as the Bundesbank, were established in the national capitals, acting coherently as a council of central bankers.

It would be perfectly possible for any country to opt out of the exchange rate mechanism or not to attend the meeting of the council of central bankers if it wanted to. But if one did not attend, it would become apparent that one was worried about the disciplines themselves and, in leaving the central mechanism, one would lose the underpinning of the exchange rate mechanism itself, so there would be a price to be paid. But if the central management of a national economy is such as to justify such a removal from the mechanism, one will pay that price in any case, so the important point is to establish disciplines which bind us into the highest standards, which are those of Europe, the deutschmark and the Bundesbank.

It is apparent from what we have heard in the House today that the alternative policies of a putative Government are those of yesterday, with no understanding of the changes that are coming. But for Britain the 1990s will be more traumatic and the change more far-reaching than is yet perceived. We shall deal with the rationalisation of industry and commerce on a scale that is relevant to the competitive challenge of the modern world only if we get inflation under control and if we have disciplines that are equal to the best in Europe. That is something that only the Conservative party understands and has the will to achieve.

5.44 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): It was interesting to hear the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) making his alternative bid for the leadership. He decried what the Labour Government did, but he should look at his own record. It takes a little more than a garden centre to revitalise Liverpool and it will take a little more than the creation of a bankers' club in Europe to revitalise Britain's economy.

The right hon. Gentleman's perspective of the history of Germany is not the true one. German industry was resurrected by the United States and Britain because of the fear of Communism at that time, and the bank followed that. If we followed the path proposed by the potential leader of the Tory party, we would not be much better off than we are under its present leadership.

Time is running out for British industry. It is faced with high interest rates which, according to the CBI, are now six points higher than they were in 1988 and which have already cost British industry £3 billion. That is the burden that is being carried by British industry. In addition, because of the deficit in the balance of payments, British industry faces the prospect of a further rise which will have grave consequences for our economy. It will push us towards deflation.

We have heard a lot about 1979 and the Labour party, but in 1979, when the Labour Government left office, investment in manufacturing industry was 3·6 per cent. of GDP. Today it is 2·7 per cent. and falling. Where do we stand in relation to our competitors? If we wanted to equip ourselves for 1992, the single European market and the increased competition that will follow, we would have to invest 50 times as much in manufacturing industry. Only that would create anything like a level playing field in our relationship with the Germans or the Japanese.

The same applies to research. We spend a lot on research into defence, but in research into civil manufacturing, we lag behind our competitors. Again, we would have to spend 50 times as much to bring us up to the German level. That is the sort of battle that we have to face. We are completely ill-equipped to face what will happen in the single market.

We hear from Conservative Members and the Secretary of State that all is well; if so, why are our scientists and engineers leaving Britain in droves? Recently, I organised a petition of scientists abroad which we presented to the Prime Minister. If the projects were available to them, those scientists would sooner be here, but the projects are not available because we are not spending our money on them.

The same applies to training, which is almost non-existent. We are training people for low-skilled, low-waged, low technology jobs. We should be training people for highly skilled, high-wage, high-technology jobs

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

if this country is to cope in the future. The Government are pursuing the folly of short-termism, of not looking ahead to the future, and we shall all pay the penalty for it.

Mr. Allen: They will not.

Mr. Hoyle: No, some of them will not. Some Conservative Members will be here, but a lot of those who have been shouting vociferously today will not be here after the next election to tell us that they have learnt their lesson and by God they will kick. Already many of them are kicking about the poll tax.

Many of our problems result from the fact that the Government abolished training courses and boards and since then there has been no training. Why is better training given in France? Because there is a levy on industries employing more than 10 people, of 1·2 per cent. of the payroll. They are producing skilled people, but we are certainly not doing that in this country. In Germany —another of our major competitors—90 per cent. of school leavers enter apprenticeships or equivalent training leading to qualifications. Contrast that with what is occurring here. Do we wonder that Germany, France, Japan and the United States are so far ahead of us?

What will save us? Who is going to rescue us? Look at the Front Bench team for the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Secretary of State himself. We heard his blundering, bumbling speech today. The Secretary of State is noted for disasters—if he had lived in another era, he would have been the captain of the Titanic. Then there is the Minister for Industry, who thinks he is a latter-day Perry Mason. The only problem is that he rarely wins a case. He has just managed to close the most modern shipyard in this country, in Sunderland—at a time when the Japanese are expanding shipbuilding and when the yard was beginning to come back. Should we not use the skills of workers in Sunderland to build ships? But the Minister for Industry caved in.

I am sorry that the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs is not here. If ever I saw a Sunday car boot salesman, the Minister for Consumer Affairs is that man. Unfortunately, the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs is not with us either. I am sorry that he has gone, because he even makes the Deputy Prime Minister seem charismatic. With him, when one switches on the television set, nothing appears and there is a voice over. These are the people who are supposedly going to save British industry; it is a bleak day when we have to depend on them.

Will those people have the vision and imagination to look to the future? Of course we all know they will not. We should intervene more in the free market economy, and strengthen the powers of the Department of Trade and Industry, but what is the Secretary of State doing? Between one Woodbine and the next, he is destroying those powers, and our immense problems remain.

Apart from the challenges arising in 1992 from the single market and increased competition, we are living in a world where armaments are decreasing. Where are the plans to change our defence industries to peaceful civil production? They just do not exist. The Government have shown no imagination as to how we can do that.

In the United States—the home of the free market economy—they realise what is needed and they are already beginning to do it. Hughes Aircraft, for example, which was 80 per cent. dependent on defence contracts has reduced that proportion to 60 per cent. and representatives of the company told me that they would scale it down to 40 per cent. What is the plan for Britain?

Obviously, the only way that we will meet the challenge of the future is by co-operation between industry, the Government and the financial institutions—if we all begin to pull together, to plan for the future and to bring forward what Conservatives used to be pleased to tell us were the sunrise industries. Under the Conservatives, they have become sunset industries. There is a huge deficit in the balance of payments for information technology, and it is getting worse, not better.

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), is in his place. He will agree with my comments because we published a report on information technology, in which we drew attention to the problems. But it will not be acted upon. The Conservative party disregards anything that needs intervention.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does my hon. Friend agree that there has been a great deal of intervention by the Government in local government and trade unions and that the functions and democracy of those bodies have been constrained by the Government?

Mr. Hoyle: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. The Government have attacked the wrong targets. Instead of strengthening local government in the regions to enable them to bring in industry, and allowing the trade unions to play a part in the changes that are occurring, they have set out to destroy them.

As long as the Conservative party is in charge, with this sorry and motley crew at the Department of Trade and Industry, and with a Prime Minister who believes in the free market, we will be unable to meet the challenges of the 1990s. What is needed is a new team, with a fresh outlook, fresh policies and fresh thinking. That is the way forward, and I hope that it will not be too long before we get that change.

5.57 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I am sure that the whole House enjoyed the excellent speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He was quite right to draw attention to overmanning within nationalised industries, which was one of the reasons why our economy got into such a muddle and a mess. He could have gone on to say that the problem was not only overmanning in nationalised industries in the 1970s, but the power of trade union leaders at that time.

I am sure that, if hon. Members on both sides of the House reflect, they will agree that trade union intransigence was responsible for killing off the car industry, the steel industry and the shipping industry and consequently——

Mr. Loyden: And lack of investment.

Sir William Clark: It was not lack of investment. The trouble was that the nationalised industries were overmanned, and their productivity was very low. The Government have curbed the powers of the trade unions, but it takes time.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley that, although we enjoyed the knockabout speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), it really was a joke. Although pressed, he did not even refer to the Labour party's policy.

Industry is tougher and fitter than it was 10 years ago. The Opposition laugh at our achievements. All that pleases them is bad economic news. They rejoice in it. By their continual talk of gloom and doom, they are doing down the British economy, to its detriment. It is time that Opposition Members—certainly those who sit on the Front Bench—referred to the achievements of the British economy. It is on those achievements that the standard of living of every man, woman and child depends.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir William Clark: No, I have only just started my speech.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry referred to the new businesses that have been set up. Since 1979, manufacturing production has grown by 13 per cent. in real terms. That is a good achievement. Efficiency has increased. Compared with 1979, the average production of employees has increased by nearly 60 per cent. Investment and exports have also increased.

Until 1986, we had a trade surplus, but during the last three years we have been in deficit. There are various reasons for that. First, our standard of living is higher. Consequently, consumer demand is much greater. Secondly, higher company profits allow companies to reinvest. Thirdly, demand has increased.

The Opposition do not seem to appreciate the underlying strength of our overseas assets. Since 1979, our net overseas assets have increased from about £25 billion to just over £100 billion. Our gold and dollar reserves stand at $38·5 billion. If we compare last year's exports performance with this year's, we see that exports have increased this year by 11 per cent., while imports have increased by only 2 per cent. That may be said to be too high, but if we compare a three-month period with the comparable period last year, we see that exports increased by 4 per cent. while exports dropped by 1 per cent. Exports per head in the United Kingdom are much higher than exports per head in Japan. We should talk about such achievements.

Private expenditure is slowing down, but there is still some way to go. The housing market has slowed down, and in many cases has gone into reverse. Consumer spending has come down. Therefore, inflation will eventually come down, too. Many of our imports are capital goods. They represent over 50 per cent. of our deficit. Millions and millions of pounds are being invested by the Japanese in our car industry, but it will be a few years before production comes on stream. Consequently, increased car production will be shown in the trade figures only in 1991. Companies are expanding, and there is more and more import substitution.

My right hon. Friend referred to research and development in the oil industry. No taxpayers' money has been invested in the oil industry; it has been developed solely by private enterprise. Nobody likes high interest rates, but——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The hon. Gentleman will have to admit that the tax regime for the companies that extract oil from the North sea is very generous. There are various ways to give subsidies to companies. One way is to set a generous tax regime. That is precisely what happened with North sea oil investment.

Sir William Clark: I am a consultant to an oil company. Under the tax regime, the tax paid by oil companies is extremely high.

Mr. Ewing *indicated dissent.*

Sir William Clark: It is no use the hon. Member shaking his head.

It is said that high interest rates are the only way to reduce inflation, but the control of public expenditure also helps. The Government have been extremely successful in holding down, and reducing, public expenditure. When we came to office, it was about 43·5 per cent. of the national income. Next year, it will be about 39 per cent.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East shed crocodile tears for people with mortgages because of the high interest rates that they have to pay. That is a turnaround for the Opposition. At one time, they did not like home ownership. It is only public opinion that has caused them to change their minds. I agree that the first-time buyer is suffering from the high interest rates, but that hardship is temporary. However, there is no reason why the second-time buyer should not rearrange his mortgage commitment so as to be able to make the same monthly interest repayments. We must keep all this in perspective.

Reference has been made to the number of people in arrears with their mortgage interest repayments and to the number of repossessions. The fact is that 8 million people have mortgages, of whom only 58,000 are in arrears with their mortgage interest repayments. Therefore, nearly 99·25 per cent. of home owners are up to date with their repayments. There have been about 13,780 repossessions. High interest rates are not responsible for all of them. I understand that over half are due to marital difficulties.

The Opposition did not say much about credit controls and how a Labour Government would control the 85 per cent. of borrowing which is on mortgages. How would that credit be controlled? The Labour Government introduced credit controls in 1970, which resulted in an average inflation rate of 15·5 per cent. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked how one would deal with the overseas banks—the Chase Manhattan bank, the Tokyo bank and so on. It is pie in the sky. In Australia, where there is a Socialist Government, the inflation rate is 20 per cent. However, the Prime Minister of Australia has stated categorically that under no circumstances would he introduce credit controls, because they would be useless.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley referred to the establishment of an independent bank. He suggested that all the members of the European Economic Community should have a national bank. However, I very much doubt whether the 12 EEC countries would agree to that. We must be practical about a national bank and also about joining the European monetary system. There are certain limits within which currencies can rise or fall within the European monetary system.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The hon. Gentleman means the exchange rate mechanism.

Sir William Clark: Yes, the exchange rate mechanism; I think all hon. Members knew what I was talking about.

One of the problems is that we have not yet seen and cannot envisage the difficulties regarding the deutschmark

[Sir William Clark]

when there is monetary union between East and West Germany. We do not know whether unification will happen, but it looks as if monetary union will come fairly soon. Whatever the exchange rate between the ostmark and the deutschmark may be, the consumer demand and spending capacity against the Bundesbank will be increased, because people in East Germany, who at the moment cannot spend their ostmarks outside that country, because they are useless, will create, if they swap them for deutschmarks, consumer demand against the deutschmark. Consequently, inflationary pressures will come into play with a unified monetary system in Germany.

With regard to industry, of course we have difficulties and of course there is concern, but I sincerely believe that the two elements of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's strategy—high interest rates and control of public expenditure—will do the trick. It will take a few months, but industry is leaner and fitter today. The cash flow of companies is much improved. In 1980, bank borrowing by companies was 45 per cent. of the value of equity; in 1987, it was 28 per cent.; today, it is probably very much lower, because the position has improved since then.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would not answer any questions. My right hon. Friend asked him about the payroll tax, and he would not answer. He was then asked about the national investment bank, which is another way of directing investment that the Labour party is very keen on. Then there is the question of what happens to dividends of industries that have been privatised. All these things have come out in policy documents, but they are not being spoken about.

My right hon. Friend suggested that they were being ditched. I think he is being very kind about that. I do not believe that they have been ditched at all; I think that they have been hidden in order to hoodwink the public into thinking that, if there were a Labour Government, all the nasty things in their policy document—payroll tax, national investment bank, control of dividends—would disappear. But that is not so. They would come in; there is no question at all about that. They have not been ditched—they have been hidden. It is a confidence trick on the public.

6.12 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I listened to the comments of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) with interest because he made a fascinating speech, in contrast to those made by Opposition and Government Front Bench Members. He made a devastating and, broadly speaking, accurate attack on the Labour party, making points rather more effectively than they could be made by quoting statistics for the 1970s and the 1980s. They went to the heart of the difference in economic approach and the effect that that had in the 1970s on the Labour party. But he also made a devastating attack on the Government because of the Prime Minister's unwillingness to see the need for an independent bank and for monetary disciplines other than interest rates. The direction in which he was heading there was an appropriate one.

The sad thing is that the right hon. Gentleman reminds me more than anything of a comet which, cast out into the cold from the centre of power, circulates around with nobody to pay much attention to it and not looking terribly interesting for a while. Then, as it heads back towards the centre of power again, in the hope, perhaps, that it will take over from the sun, it attracts its little streamer of hangers-on anxious to hear what it has to say. Whether they will stick with it or float away again over the next year or so remains to be seen.

The situation that brought the right hon. Gentleman to the Chamber today is nevertheless a serious one. This was not adequately reflected in the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), in which there were plenty of jokes but no meat, or in that from the Secretary of State, who gave his familiar contemptuous response but again failed to tackle the underlying problems that the country is facing. Both those speeches, but particularly the Secretary of State's speech, failed to reflect the concern expressed to me by business men, the Confederation of British Industry and, indeed, a whole range of people about the difficulties that the economy is in, and, therefore, that the Government are in. The climate of uncertainty and the lack of confidence in the Government's ability to manage the economy are among the root causes of our present problems.

That is one of the fundamental changes of the past few years. If there was anything that the Government depended on—this was something that they argued for in opposition and in the early years of government—it was confidence and certainty about Government strategy—that it could work, and that they meant it. The loss of that confidence in the anti-inflationary strategy—the loss of belief that the Government mean what they said about tackling the fundamental problems of the economy—led to many of the problems that we have faced and are facing.

We also have the well-grounded fear that inflation is on the way up again and that it could hit 9 per cent. in the next quarter. We have had pressure on sterling, even in the last few days. When the Secretary of State tries to dismiss the latest trade figures as merely an unfortunate erratic item, one cannot wonder that, whereas those in the City who study these matters swallowed that excuse in the short term, they clearly did not accept it once they had had a moment to think about it. There is now fear of a further rise in base rates to prop up the pound and curb inflationary pressure.

All these things go right to the heart of what the Government have always said they were about during the past 10 years. They also demand an adequate response from the Opposition parties. There is no advantage to the country or to the House in knockabout speeches that are high on public relations but failures on O-level economics. The paucity of policy from the Labour party raises serious concern about the job that it is doing. There is nothing wrong with the PR; there is nothing wrong with the argument; we can all agree with the argument. But it does not do for the Labour party to talk always of the long term, always of the things it wants to achieve, but never of the concrete reality of how to achieve them.

We have seen the trade figures putting pressure on the pound over the last few days. The January trade figures show that high interest rates are not working sufficiently to dampen the demand for imports. Whatever the Government say about erratic items, the truth of the situation is underlined by the January consumer credit figures, which show the highest increase in consumer credit on record. The figures show that consumer credit is not slowing but still expanding at 2 per cent. a month.

Although M0 and M3 have disappeared into the history books as measurements of what is happening in the economy, there can be no question but that real credit difficulties and the supposed interest rate policy pursued by the Government are mutually incompatible. If the Government's interest rate strategy was working, consumer credit should be coming under control. Even worse, wage inflation is further evidence that any slow down in consumer credit and later in inflation may well be only temporary as wage inflation pushes up the price inflation that the Government created only a couple of years ago. It is clear that consumer demand has not been satisfactorily brought under control, and reliance on high interest rates has not even begun to provide a proper answer.

Government policy and the disease afflicting the economy are starting to become one. High interest rates are crippling industry, and I have said that there are already fears of a further rise in base rates. Last year there was a 10 per cent. increase in business failures and, if high interest rates continue, bankruptcies will increase. The CBI quarterly survey in January reported a sharp fall in demand among large companies and a levelling of manufacturing output. It is not surprising that CBI surveys have shown that industry's intentions to invest are falling. Investment in plant and machinery is expected to fall. Of course Government investment has also fallen.

Although the Liberal Democrats have unequivocally supported the moves towards the single market and 1992, Government involvement in that process cannot stop with DTI posters announcing in franglais that the single market is here. The question on the posters, "Where are you?" might be better directed at the Government. The Government should tackle supply in the economy and long-term investment in research and development, transport and education.

The problems in manufacturing industry are already critical. Manufacturing industry is being starved of investment when many firms are already working at or near capacity. Many firms are held back by the lack of capital investment and skilled staff. The short-termism that that reflects—much of it related to Government policy—is the most serious and damning criticism of the Government. Solutions are available, and they have been proposed not only by the right hon. Member for Henley but by many hon. Members on both sides of the House, including many Cabinet Ministers, but they are resisted by the person in the strongest position to block them or push them through—that is, the Prime Minister.

Interest rates could be lowered without the problems that the Government fear if there were a commitment to joining the ERM by the end of the year. Unless that commitment is made, sterling will continue to fall as soon as interest rates are cut or confidence in the Government falls. We are not arguing for membership of the ERM as an easy solution—far from it. Our policies have tackled the problems and have addressed what would need to be done to avoid running into further difficulties. However, membership of the ERM would give industry a more certain environment in which to operate and would help to bring an end to the stop-go approach which has done so much damage to industry under Tory and Labour Administrations.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I am sorry to postpone the hon. Gentleman's fascinating recital of fact, but when he says that membership of the ERM will not be an easy solution, how hard does he envisage it will be? Will it be as hard as it was in France, where it managed to increase unemployment to 2·6 million, or in Italy where unemployment increased to 2·9 million? Will it be that hard for us?

Mr. Taylor: No. I meant that it would be hard in that the Chancellor would have to take measures to bring down the inflationary effects of joining the ERM and cutting interest rates. The hon. Gentleman performs a useful function in that, by opposing joining the ERM, he exposes the duplicity of Labour Front-Bench spokesmen. We have consistently argued that although Labour Front-Bench spokesmen like to talk about joining the ERM as an easy criticism of the Conservative Government, in practice, they have proposed a series of blocking conditions before they would be prepared to join it. The hon. Gentleman was obliging enough to point that out on another occasion by saying that he was prepared to support those on the Labour Front Bench because he was well aware that the conditions for joining that the Labour party was laying down could never be met.

Over the years we have missed opportunities that could have been provided by joining the ERM and bringing down interest rates. If we are not to miss future opportunities, the Chancellor should announce in his Budget that he will begin negotiations to secure our entry as soon as is practicable. The Budget speech could then be about cutting interest rates and tackling the problems of British industry, but it would also have to be a tight Budget to prevent demand from increasing and some of the current problems getting worse.

The Chancellor could do that in ways that were fair and responded to the need while redressing some of the inequities in the current tax system. The Chancellor should at least get rid of the national insurance ceiling and reduce mortgage interest tax relief to the basic rate. Those measure would be felt only by the better-off, who in many ways are most responsible for the current trade deficit. They would have a beneficial effect on imports and inflation.

We have also supported the CBI's call for the investment allowance to be raised from 25 to 40 per cent. to tackle some of the supply-side problems, although we would restrict that to new investment. That would encourage investment and would not be inflationary. The forthcoming Budget provides opportunities, if the Chancellor is prepared to be brave and imaginative and, most important of all, to do what Chancellors should do and not what Prime Ministers say. I hope that the Chancellor will overcome that difficulty. Once he has done that, he can start to tackle some of the fundamental supply-side difficulties, in transport, research and, above all, education.

I feel most strongly that we are selling the people of this country short on education and training. We all suffer and, in a sense, we all share the blame for under-investing in research and development, but we should not throw away the opportunities available to the younger generation. They depend on us for only one thing. They can make their own way later on, but they depend on us to give them the education and training that, we hope, will see them through most of the rest of their lives. We need to expand in-service training, but every child in education has one brief opportunity which is never repeated.

[Mr. Taylor]

Any Government who let them down cannot put things right later, as there is no second chance for the children who are now in education and training. The skills shortages are with us now and the problems cannot be ovecome overnight, but if we do not make that fundamental investment, there will be no second chance. Therefore, we propose a series of policies that start to put people back into education and training of a standard that needs to be met and which is already offered in many of our competitor countries.

Not only do European countries educate in further and higher education more youngsters than we do, but countries such as Taiwan are producing per head of population more graduates than we produce. Our training schemes need improving. Youngsters under 18, even those in work, should have a statutory entitlement to further training.

Let us beware of those companies that feel that their time and energy can best be spent poaching the trained staff of other companies, rather than themselves doing the training. We would institute a remissible training allowance by which the economics of training would be weighted in favour of companies that believe in apprenticeships and long-term investment in their employees, and away from companies that think that it is quick, clever and easy to poach from other firms.

The Labour party has failed to spell out its policies on that and many other issues. I do not disagree with much of what Labour Members say about the need to invest long-term in training, education, research and development. But they must spell out how they would do it, for that is fundamental to getting it right. Time and again in debates of this kind, Labour Members have not explained how they would put their policies into practice.

6.30 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): In the days of studenthood, one was asked in *The Observer* mace competition to speak to a motion the wording of which one was given shortly before the debate. Judging from recent performances of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), a practised debater, one can only conclude that he was given the wording of the motion only after he had spoken. His recent speeches have been witty but totally devoid of detail about the policies to which he was supposed to have been addressing his remarks. That applied to his speech this afternoon.

The people of Britain deserve to know what policies the Labour party has to address the difficulties of the economy. It is no good Labour Members saying, "We wish we were not starting from here." The people must know whether it is Labour policy, for example, to remove the pain of high interest rates by forcing down interest rates regardless of other factors in the economy. If Labour would do that, we should soon return to the inflationary heyday of the last Labour Government, when inflation levels averaged 15·5 per cent., compared with the lower levels that the Conservatives have successfully maintained throughout the 1980s.

Unless Labour Members show that they appreciate why we were successful throughout the 1980s, it will be impossible for them to compose policies to address the problems of the British economy. They never talk about the improvements that have occurred, for example, in the levels of productivity. They have not assessed the reasons why we have achieved massive job creation, the figures of which compare favourably with other members of the European Community.

Labour Members have not focused on the interesting investment figures for British manufacturing industry, which have been particularly strong in the capital goods sector, a factor which has contributed to the change in the balance of trade through import of capital goods. Labour Members do not talk about the number of new businesses that have been created—on a net basis, still running at over 1,000 a week. Nor do they talk about the supply side—the issues on which the new democracies in eastern Europe focus—especially our ability to abolish controls, which we have done progressively from 1979 onwards. None of that is part of official Labour party policy.

Nor have Labour Members welcomed, as Conservative Members have, the programme relating to 1992. I welcome to the Government Front Bench the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, whose efforts in making sure that the 1992 programme continues have been applauded in the House and have made a major impact on the economies of this and other European Community countries.

Clearly, we were blown off course by certain international events in 1987. Indeed, had they not occurred we would not be facing many of the present problems. But the test of a firm Government is the way in which they react to those problems. World experts in 1987, particularly after the stock market crash, forecast a worldwide recession. That was the view of the pundits in the City of London. There was fair unanimity in this House about that, and in New York the pundits were speaking of the same problem.

Reflation—relaxation of monetary aggregates—was a natural reaction to those circumstances. Remarkably, the capitalist system did not collapse, as many articles in the quality press forecast. Indeed, the buoyancy of the capitalist system was remarkable, and we reacted wrongly. We predicted a recession and the failure of capitalism, but capitalism triumphed, although that had some unfortunate knock-on effects. The inflation that we had today—at levels of which the Labour party would have been proud when it was in office in the 1970s—was caused by that degree of monetary laxity, not by errors in budgetary management.

The budgetary side is being run on a basis of tight fiscal policy. We have a public sector surplus, which is a notable achievement. The problem was caused not by Goverment profligacy but by private sector domestic borrowing. The only credible response to that has been to increase the cost of money. The Conservatives have had the courage to introduce such a policy. The test of a Government is not that they never make a mistake—no Government have ever had that honourable distinction—but whether, having seen that a mistake has been made, they have the courage to correct it.

Once monetary aggregates had begun to relax, there was a tightening, even at the cost of short-term opinion poll difficulties. There is no doubt that the manifestation of the increased supply of money was the withdrawal of equity from booming property prices from 1987 to 1989. The correction of that relies on higher interest charges, but particularly the mortgage rate.

Although it is not politically easy to accept it, there is no doubt that recent decisions by building societies to increase their mortgage rates to a level even higher than base rates have had a welcome and direct depressant on the housing market at this stage, even though it is extremely painful. Many of my constituents have told me about that pain. But the Government must show that they can conquer inflation, and if inflation can be conquered, houses will once again prove a good long-term investment.

By having increased the cost of money, a positive effect is already evident. My hon. Friends have referred to the improving trend in export growth, and the figures are interesting. The figures for the last three months compared with the same three months of the previous year show that non-oil exports have risen by 11 per cent. against a static growth in imports. That means that the sharp rise in the balance of trade deficit reflected excess domestic demand —that we were sucking in imports faster than manufacturing industry and other industries could produce goods. It was not the fault of an over-valued pound. In other words, the competitiveness of the British economy is still sound. Our problem was that we had excess demand and we had to tackle it. It is clear that those inflationary pressures still exist.

There are special factors, which have been discussed, which will ensure that the level of short-term inflation stays high, although the underlying rate of inflation, if one excludes mortgage rates, is much lower and much healthier. The strange point about mortgate rates is that, although they increase the rate of inflation—the retail price index—they are a deflationary element. The mortgage rate is working in a conflicting way, so we must keep our eyes on the underlying rate of inflation.

With those inflationary pressures, what policy should the Government adopt? I do not advocate short-term changes in fiscal policy as a way of depressing demand. That is not to say that the Budget should not tighten fiscal policy. We shall see what happens. However, we cannot easily bear down on the total expansion of domestic demand by altering fiscal policy in major ways. That causes subsequent structural difficulties. Much academic research, including that by Alan Budd, has shown that, used to depress demand, fiscal policies take a long time to work through into the economy and have undesirable long-term effects.

We could set new monetary targets, which is a sensible policy. Monetary expansion, even in narrow money, is still worryingly high. However, to set such targets is, in itself, insufficient. Setting monetary targets has to be linked with a clear, objective guideline and a signal that the Government are pursuing a medium to long-term policy against inflation.

I encourage the Government, therefore, to bring forward a policy to which they are now already committed —entry into the exchange rate mechanism. That will provide a stable framework for monetary policies. It will also have an important impact on wage levels in this country. The experience of France is relevant here. Attaching oneself to a stable currency backed by stable money will give more confidence in the purchasing power of the pound.

If one increases confidence in the purchasing power of the pound, one is effectively discouraging trade unions from looking for highly inflationary wage settlements. That is exactly what happened in France. Between 1983 and 1986, France broke the wage-cost spiral by a clear signal that it would maintain the purchasing power of the French franc. Such a policy would have a beneficial impact in this country. It would signal that we were prepared to follow an anti-inflationary policy over a long period, and it would therefore reinforce tight monetary targets.

To those who are worried by such matters—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is one—there is no doubt that we are buffeted or affected by changes in the deutschmark. Come what may, we shall be affected by the level of deutschmark exchange. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) said, we shall be buffeted by the changes that may result from the deutschmark union. That will affect us anyway. We shall not be worse off in the exchange rate mechanism: in those circumstances, we shall be better off.

The argument about the rate at which we should enter again misses the point. The current level would be a reasonable point at which to enter, and it happens to be roughly similar to the level in 1986, which was another window of opportunity that we might have taken. We may enter at a level that results in having to intervene to keep the pound up. We should bear in mind the fact that that would involve selling foreign currency and buying sterling. That would reduce monetary supply, and would therefore be deflationary. Those are elements which, in our current circumstances, are themselves virtuous. That is an extra benefit of joining the exchange rate mechanism now.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Virtue is always terribly good for other people. If one sticks one's currency in the ERM, the EMS or whatever one wishes to call it, one is stuck with the fact that, if one has to stay within that band, the only way in which one can control the currency is by interest rates. If we had to put our interest rates up by 1 per cent. in staying in that awful artificial barrier, how could it help this country? If one really wants to ruin the economy, just put 1 per cent. more on the interest rates which, I agree, might keep us within the band.

Mr. Taylor: With great respect to the learning of my hon. Friend on the subject, I disagree. There is a greater likelihood of an increase in interest rates, were we not in the exchange rate mechanism, if the German economy itself increased interest rates. There is also likely to be a mildly depressing effect on interest rates at any given level of inflation once we are in the exchange rate mechanism. Consequently, there is a virtuous benefit from being in the exchange rate mechanism at this point and, if necessary, intervening in the monetary market to keep sterling up. That is anti-inflationary.

In terms of the external aspects, the entry conditions laid down at Madrid have largely been met. The French abolished their own exchange and capital controls on 1 January, and the Italians are moving in that direction. If they follow suit, we shall find that over 80 per cent. of the gross national product of the European Community is represented by countries that do not have exchange or capital controls. That seems to meet the substantive external point.

Do we wait for inflation to go down in this country, and then consider joining, or do we use the ERM as a means of bearing down on inflation? It is clear from my remarks that I believe that we should enter at around our present level of inflation, so that we can bear down on it by using

[Mr. Taylor]

the anti-inflationary benefits of the ERM. In any event, keeping a firm exchange rate will have to be part of the Government's strategy, as should be made clear in the Budget speech.

There are other questions to which we look forward to answers in the Budget. One is the Government's attitude to the gilt-edged market, which is very important. There is a weakness at the long end in interest rates at present, and there are some journalistic thoughts——

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Before my hon. Friend leaves his interesting point on the exchange rate mechanism, will he tell us why he does not feel that there is some difficulty for the United Kingdom which arises out of the very high volume of trading of sterling, which is not related to goods and services? Sterling is traded in any one week at about the level which would be our national requirement for a year. The same applies to the deutschmark. Such a bipolar system might upset the equilibrium of the ERM rather than assist us.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. Clearly such a disequilibrating effect on the ERM will be part of the negotiations when we enter. As a result of the volatility of sterling, which sometimes results from wide international holdings and the trading in them, it may be necessary to enter in the transitional period at the 6 per cent. margin rather than with the smaller margin of 2·5 per cent.

As we need the objective criteria that membership of the ERM would give our anti-inflationary policy, we should leave the experts to decide what the circumstances and the range of fluctuation around the mean should be when they are taking us in. I believe that, unless we have a firm exchange rate policy and unless we are in the ERM to fulfil that policy, we shall not fully eradicate inflationary pressures in the economy with as much ease as we should like.

I was referring to the gilt-edged market. It would be interesting to hear in the Budget about the Treasury's attitude towards that market, about its policy towards funding and whether, given the continued inflationary problem and monetary laxity, it might consider issuing new stock, which would be an interesting signal to the market.

The single European market of 1992 has integrated liberal market economics into the British economy. Perhaps Opposition Members will want to call that liberal-social market economics. Deregulation has had a dramatic effect on our economy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) went further, and said that some form of independent banking system within the European Community could have a beneficial effect and —if we take my analogy—could integrate sound monetary policy into the British economy. I should welcome further consideration of that point, as the argument has now been moved forward to discussing economic and monetary union.

The Government are on the right lines. They are bearing down on the rate of inflation, although that is difficult, as there are inflationary pressures in the economy. It will require continued pain and interest rates to stay at their present level for a considerable time. It will also require a tight fiscal and monetary policy. However, all those measures would be healthily reinforced by entry into the exchange rate mechanism.

Once the economy has been put right and is beginning to grow in a non-inflationary manner, we can continue to do those things that the Government have already done in some degree of magnitude, such as investing more money in training, in education and in the transport infrastructure. Those supply side measures are welcome, but they are not the sole answer, and it is no good the Labour party pretending that they are. They are a long-term solution to a much more general British problem.

The problem is to beat out the inflationary tendency. That requires courageous government, difficult decisions and even risking short-term electoral unpopularity—but, my goodness, it is the only way that a proper Government can behave, especially a Conservative Government.

6.52 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) referred to previous mace debating competitions in *The Observer*. I am sure that he will not mind my saying that, on today's performance, he would not have been in the running for any prizes.

One of the major propositions made by the Secretary of State related to inward and outward investment. All hon. Members welcome inward investment. Those who have directly benefited from it in their constituencies and know the technology that can come with it appreciate that it would be foolish to resent or resist it. The Secretary of State saw fit to refer to a recent article by Victor Keegan in *The Guardian*. He said that he approved of it, which would make for a pretty unholy alliance by ordinary standards. However, like all alliances it had the one hallmark of expediency—it left out the crucial differences.

What the right hon. Gentleman did not remember was that—I have not had occasion to consult that article since he spoke, but I am sure that my memory is good enough —Mr. Keegan finished his article with some severe warnings. He said that it was excellent to have high levels of inward investment as it could bring certain skills, knowledge, experience and employment to the country. However, when that investment is on stream and the dividends start to flow back in five to 10 years' time, where can we look for the indigenous investment to provide two crucial things—the flow across exchanges of the exports that are produced in this country and move abroad, and the employment that can, and still does, come from a heavy sustained investment in the manufacturing sector?

Victor Keegan said that we should welcome inward investment, but we should not regard it as a substitute for the indigenous investment—it is not intended to be that —on which the British economy will depend in the long term. I have heard much about the long-term policies that have been put forward, but which are being disregarded by the Government.

Mr. Allen: The flows of capital that return in dividends and profits could be beneficial to this country were they matched by the flows of profit that return to external competitors. The problem is that profits returning to the United Kingdom are not invested in the indigenous domestic manufacturing base—as they are in Japan, as part of a long-term planning process—but go into the

hot-money circle and even into short-term current accounts with banks, where they attract a higher rate of interest than if they were invested in domestic industry.

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend makes two good points, especially on outward investment. Indeed, he has precisely anticipated my next point. Just as inward investment has its rightful role within the economy and within British industry—although it is not a substitute for indigenous investment—so we welcome outward investment if it is a logical extension of any successful economy's problems of saturation of certain markets or where the distribution network is inadequate and investment must be made in distribution in those markets or, indeed, for whatever reason, in local manufacture.

The countries that are now most heavily investing abroad are those that have had the heaviest sustained indigenous investment and have the biggest current surpluses from manufacturing. Germany and Japan now have to invest heavily in Britain and other markets because they can no longer successfully invest and, nationally, no longer need to invest in their domestic market.

Mr. Butterfill: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Britain is second only to Japan in external investments? His points about Japan and Germany are irrelevant. He is contradicting himself when he says that outward investment is essentially undesirable because we should have indigenous investment and that inward investment is also undesirable. Surely that is a contradiction. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Robinson: I am sorry that I gave way. Either the hon. Gentleman was not listening or he is incapable of understanding. If he was not listening he has in some way excused himself, and if he is incapable of understanding there is no point in repeating what I said.

My second point—again, touched on by the Secretary of State—is the trade balance. Not so many years ago, the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to our balance of trade in manufactures as the acid test for the successful performance of the British economy. The Government now have to find refuge in all types of new economic jargon and reasoning to suggest that that trade balance is no longer of any particular significance.

I still believe in a world where the conflicts between nations of two generations ago were fought out by military means. The war in internationally traded capital goods and consumer goods is now as fierce and intense as anything we have ever witnessed. It is still about the same things—economic predominance, national sovereignty, power and influence in the world. Now, thank God, the balance has changed from the military sphere to that of internationally traded goods and services. Now, goods predominate in that international trade war. We must state with the starkest clarity that in that war the United Kingdom is losing year after year.

In the dreadful balance of payments figures announced last year, which sent tremors through the financial markets of the world, one major industry—the motor industry—carries a principal part of the blame. The balance of trade deficit was in excess of £5 billion and the motor industry made up 25 per cent. of our total deficit.

When we consider the shenanigans—I find it difficult to find another word for it—surrounding the Rover sale to British Aerospace, which Opposition Members want to be cleared up once and for all, we must say loudly and clearly to British Aerospace that once that matter is settled it has a major responsibility for the successful development and expansion of the Rover company. It is our last semi-volume manufacturer. British Aerospace must invest in it with a commitment that goes beyond the property deals and the balance sheet strengthening of which it made great play in internal memoranda. It must realise that it has acquired a major national asset on very favourable terms from the Government and that it has a direct, heavy and continuing responsibility for it.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I recognise the part that the hon. Gentleman played in Jaguar's early career, but does he not agree that some hon. Members, regrettably in his party as well, have tried to make political capital out of the agreement that was reached between Rover and British Aerospace? Bearing in mind the fact that British Aerospace has committed £1·3 billion to the future of Rover, and bearing in mind his pre-eminent part in Jaguar, will he stop some of his colleagues trying for political purposes to ruin the Rover company, on which so many jobs depend in the area in which he and I live, work and prosper politically?

Mr. Robinson: I will respond to the intervention in the same spirit in which it was made. Of course, there was an all-party inquiry into Rover. It was not a party political matter in itself, but in all parts of the House there are some hon. Members who are always intent on making political capital out of anything. I say to the hon. Gentleman, as openly as he spoke to me, that if I thought for a moment that my appeal to such hon. Members on this side of the House would be fruitful, I would make it. But I think that it would be as unprofitable and ineffective as any appeal made by the hon. Gentleman to his side.

I turn to the future of the Department of Trade and Industry. There are in the Department at least two Ministers who would much prefer to be somewhere else.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Robinson: If the hat fits, wear it. I see the Under-Secretary of State shaking his head vigorously. I assure him that I was not even remotely thinking of him. In his junior position he does not yet register in my thoughts. I am thinking of the senior Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry. There have been so many Secretaries of State in that once distinguished and still most important office that it seems to be regarded merely as a shunting station between Departments within the Government.

I think that it was the predecessor of the present incumbent but about six, now in another place, who went to the Cabinet, and said, "I have a paper from my Department which recommends that we should back a major national industry and that we should put up the money for this industry. We have to do it because jobs and exports are at stake. Here it is, Prime Minister. I do not agree with it. I want nothing to do with it. I cannot back it." However, the sensible members in the Cabinet went ahead and voted it through.

The same attitude is adopted by the present Secretary of State, who makes it clear that he has no interest in the Department. He does not want to conduct the Department or serve in it. What he would most like to do, as so

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cunningly and cleverly pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), is close the Department.

Wit is not the order of the day in the debate. Conservative Members who have complained are devoid of it themselves. I ask the Secretary of State to address himself seriously to the problem. He has no mandate to close the Department or to run down major sections within it. In product-based sections there are many loyal, capable civil servants who have spent their industrial and often their whole official careers building up knowledge and experience of particular industries. We will not accept that the Secretary of State has the right to make proposals that would involve major restructuring of that Department.

I worked in the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation which was abruptly closed after the 1970 election, without consultation and without forethought for the good that it might bring to the nation. It was easy to close it, yet within three or four years, the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), announced publicly that that had been a major mistake. Of course, that in itself is the strongest possible encouragement that we can give the present Secretary of State, although I hope that he will not take it as such.

I hope the Secretary of State will realise that he is in charge of a major Department of State and that nothing could be worse for the national attitude to manufacturing than for us to show insouciance and neglect for manufacturing industry. We should not denigrate the Department or take away its remaining powers. Nothing could give a worse impression of how manufacturing stands in national priorities than for the Secretary of State to do that. It would no longer be a case of the benign neglect which we have seen so far; it would be tantamount to a malign disregard for manufacturing.

No Government have yet managed to put right what is fundamentally wrong with British industry. Again I speak mainly of manufacturing industry. Certainly the Government, much to their discredit, have not attempted to solve the problem. As a nation, in our cultural institutions, in our institutions of higher education and in secondary schools, we have an in-built set of cultural values which places manufacturing far behind other things with which it should rank equal. If we are to make it clear to youngsters that we believe that manufacturing has importance, that we wish to encourage the teaching of science and engineering, and that we wish to encourage the promotion of graduates and ensure that they are regarded with esteem and respect, that must start with the Government. The lead must be given by the Department responsible for the industries whose standing we wish to restore.

The Government have not had a popular theme during the 10-plus years that they have been in office. Disparaging remarks have been made by another former incumbent of the office of Secretary of State. He could think of no better future for British workers than maintaining and servicing Japanese robots. That was his concept of British technology. A previous Chancellor said that he could see no difference between a job in manufacturing and a job in a service industry, and that in future all increases in employment would come from low-tech industries and not from high-tech manufacturing.

That attitude has permeated the Government and reinforced our major difficulty as a nation in coming to terms with the strong international competition in world markets. At last—after 10 years—the Government seem to have caught on. We have had one speech in those 10 years that sought to redress the balance. It was made recently by the Leader of the House and deputy Prime Minister. I agree with every word he said. He said that we have to place manufacturing much higher on our national scale of priorities. He said that manufacturing was the

"indispensable dynamo of a successful modern society"

and concluded:

"Innovate, invest, internationalise."

That was exactly the policy proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East. We have to invest more in research and development, in products and in manufacturing. Certainly we have to internationalise, but we can do it only on the basis of major investment in training.

Nothing could be more pathetic than this criticism from Conservative Members: "But all those are long-term policies. You will not get any return on your investment in training, in manufacturing plant and equipment, or in research and development." That is what we heard in a remarkably passionate speech by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). That was the passion which swept the right hon. Gentleman out of the Cabinet, and I expect that it is on the back of that passion that he sees himself being swept back into the Cabinet, in due course, in a different capacity. He put his argument as if it were some condemnation, some valid criticism of the Opposition's policies. Of course it is not; it is the single best endorsement of those policies with which he agreed. If only the Government had embarked on those policies 10 years ago, when they came to office, or even five years ago, when they should have had time to see the error of their ways, we should not now face the absolute collapse of all their policies.

But 10 years is long enough. There is no point in the Government's harking back. With a trade deficit of £20 billion, with inflation pushing 9 per cent., and with interest rates pushing 16 per cent., we are confronted with a bankrupt policy, a disbanded Department and miserably uninterested Ministers. The solution to all those problems is replacement of those Ministers and those policies, and I think that the by-election in Mid-Staffordshire will take us one step further in that direction.

7.11 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I ought to start, as I have done previously when speaking on economic themes, by declaring an interest in certain aspects of financial services and financial communications through my connections with Morgan Grenfell and with Dewe Rogerson. I need hardly say that neither the views nor, so far as I am consciously aware, the interests of those companies or, indeed, of their clients have had direct influence on the views that I shall be formulating this afternoon.

I too greatly enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). It was extremely amusing. The hon. Member has already earned quite a number of accolades as a joker in this House this

afternoon, and I should like to add a bouquet of my own. However, I thought that, in other respects, his speech was particularly disappointing. I did not betray any hint that the hon. Member had the remotest idea how to address the three issues that are highlighted in his own motion—interest rates, the balance of payments and inflation.

It really will not do to claim that interest rates are too high, that the balance of payments current account deficit is too high, and that inflation is too high. The hon. Gentleman will not find in this country, or indeed anywhere in the world, a single reputable economist—and this goes for those retained by the Labour party—who will not tell him that a reduction in interest rates tends to increase a current account deficit and to increase inflation.

In other words, the hon. Gentleman may attempt to reduce the first of his variables, or the second and third, but not all three at the same time. I hope that, before he comes back to this Chamber to lecture us on economic policy, the hon. Gentleman will at least work out in his own mind in which direction he is going.

The other disappointing aspect of the hon. Gentleman's speech, which, not surprisingly, has been remarked on already, was the extraordinary vacuity of his proposals for the future.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): What proposals?

Mr. Davies: I will come to them. So far as I understood them, they seemed to boil down to the view that the country's economic problems could be solved by a quite fatuous mixture of increased Government subsidies to the regions and elsewhere in this country; and, abroad, by reliance on the eastern European market.

On the question of the east European market, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, if he were ever to become marketing director of a company, his first responsibility would be to decide whether the people to whom he intended to offer his products were in a position to pay for them. If not, he would be squandering his company's resources, and no doubt sacrificing good markets elsewhere.

The purchasing power of a country is a very simple function indeed. It is a function of two variables—the ability of that country to sell abroad, and its ability to borrow abroad. On both those fronts, the countries of eastern Europe are in an exceedingly weak position. If ever the hon. Gentleman were to become marketing director of a public company, its shareholders would all very rapidly be selling its shares short.

I fear that, if there were the slightest danger of the hon. Gentleman's ever becoming a Minister responsible for trade in this country, the international foreign exchange markets and the international equity and other capital markets would very rapidly be selling short any claims on this country.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): What does the hon. Gentleman think the markets are doing now? What have they been doing for the last three days? What has the pound been doing for the last three days?

Mr. Davies: I am very glad that the hon. Gentlemen has noticed that. Over the past few days, the markets have begun to take account of the possibility that the Opposition will win the next election, and the combined aggregate intelligence of all the international markets is that that would be an unqualified economic disaster for this country.

The performance of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was not only disappointing, but deplorable. It was deplorable that a Front Bencher, addressing the House in front of our rather obtrusive new members, the television cameras, should, on such an important issue, deliver a speech so unrigorous in its analysis and so thoroughly devoid of any considered or concrete proposals for the future. When the hon. Gentleman, towards the end of his speech, referred to failures and bankruptcies, I could not help feeling that there is one bankruptcy in this country that is very much overdue: the hon. Member ought himself to be filing a petition in intellectual bankruptcy.

I want to move now from the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues to the real world.

Mr. Graham: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, since 1988-89, the number of bankruptcies in Scotland has risen by 61·5 per cent? Bankruptcy means not just the loss of money but the loss of jobs. Would the hon. Gentleman like to say something about that?

Mr. Davies: It would be helpful if the hon. Member were to grasp the fact that the important index is the net creation of new enterprises. Over the last few years, that net creation has been increasing at an unprecedented rate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not find this argument too difficult to follow. Obviously, if there is an absolute increase in the number of enterprises, there will inevitably be an increase in the number of bankruptcies. It is the net position that counts, and it is the net position that is positive.

Two problems face us at present. First, it is clear—in hindsight at least—that in 1988 the economy was suffering from some overheating: let hon. Members call that a problem of success if they will. It could be argued in retrospect that some monetary tightening could have taken place earlier than it did, but that certainly could not be argued by the Labour party, which has consistently opposed all increases in interest rates. Secondly, the past year has seen a worldwide increase in inflation and interest rates. Even countries such as the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland and Japan, which believed that they had solved the inflation problem definitively, now find that it has returned.

Throughout economic history, it has always been a disaster for a particular agent or country to attempt to buck a general trend. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has heard of trade cycles, or whether he believes in them; he may imagine that they are a myth of bourgeois economics that could easily be wished away if only a Labour Government came to power. I can tell him, however, that any attempt to ignore business or trade cycles is fraught with horrific consequences, and that the effect of such action will be felt most painfully precisely on the current account deficit and inflation rate indices that Opposition Members claim lie so close to their hearts.

Given those two factors, a narrow margin of manoeuvre was available to the Government. But within that narrow margin, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made a very significant decision since his appointment last autumn: I am surprised that its import has been lost on Opposition Members. That decision was not to

[Mr. Davies]

continue to increase interest rates in sterling to meet any threat to the sterling parity on the foreign exchanges, but to allow a measure of devaluation within what remained, overall, a tight fiscal and monetary policy.

Why was that decision so significant? It meant that the reduction in the growth of demand would be felt in a differentiated fashion by different sectors of the economy. The purely domestic sectors, such as retail, house building and associated goods and services would feel the effect to the full—as they have done, and are doing—while the internationally traded sectors would find that, although their domestic markets were growing less fast, there was some compensation: in many cases, over-compensation. They had gained the ability to increase their domestic market share and their market share abroad, and to enjoy higher sterling values for the remittance of their overseas profits. A range of businesses, including not only the ICIs and the GECs—I hasten to add that I have no interest to declare in either—but also a whole range of businesses have been able to benefit from my right hon. Friend's decision. Their prospects—and therefore the momentum of investment in important sectors of the economy—can and will be maintained as a result.

Why do I express surprise that the significance of my right hon. Friend's decision has not been recognised by Opposition Members? I have two reasons. First and foremost, it benefited manufacturing—together with a few high-tech services including some aspects of engineering, financial and computer services, but largely at the expense of the service sector. Since I have been in the House, I have had to listen to literally hours of what I now suspect to have been empty rhetoric from Opposition Members about manufacturing. My second reason is the direct impact of my right hon. Friend's decision on the current account deficit: the combination of tight fiscal and monetary conditions and a devaluation of the currency is a classic formula for reducing a current account deficit or increasing a current account surplus.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: If the strategy was to let the pound come down through benign neglect, why has the CBI not expressed its usual gibbering gratitude? What is the effect of high interest rates on industry, and why are our interest rates more or less double everyone else's?

Mr. Davies: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, I do not speak for the CBI, but I understand that it does appreciate the benefits conferred on large sectors of industry, including manufacturing industry. Let me ask again for a modicum of rigour in our discussion of interest rates. We should be focusing not on nominal but on real interest rates—and our real interest rates are comparable with those in the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany and elsewhere.

What, then, should the Government do? First, they should persevere with their present policies; secondly, fiscal rather than monetary policy should, where possible, take the strain. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will go not for a neutral but for a tough Budget—a Budget that reduces demand by a palpable amount. To the extent that he does so, it will be possible to resist interest rate increases, or to allow the rates to decline further and faster for any given set of inflationary and other economic outcomes.

Thirdly—I think that the House is in general agreement on this—we need to invest more in education and training in both public and private sectors, and also in the British infrastructure. I have nothing to add to the eloquent speeches to that effect that we have heard today. I also thoroughly endorse what has been said about the importance of the single market, which will provide one of the best prospects for non-inflationary growth in the 1990s and beyond—not merely because of the one-off benefits of longer production runs, economies of scale and the reduction of some transactional costs associated with trade, which were calculated in the Cecchini report, but also because of the dynamic effects and particularly the impetus to entrepreneurship and innovation that invariably follow from an intensification of competition, such as we will face in the single market. Therefore, I greatly endorse the points made on that score.

I should like to add a fourth point of my own. The Government should give—I hope that they are already giving or that they will give—some consideration to how the British savings ratio, the proportion of household income that is saved, can be increased over time. Over many years and generations, it has been clear that, at any turn in the trade cycle, the British savings ratio is lower than that of our major competitors. In terms of the current account and inflation, that constitutes a lower ceiling or a higher constraint on the levels of investment and growth that we can sustain.

I suspect that any secular change in the British savings ratio can be engineered or modulated only by fiscal means. Of course, many cultural and institutional factors underlie any given savings ratio. I will not burden the House with my own views about how that may be achieved, but this issue needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) will have something specific to say on that subject when he delivers his Budget in a few days.

7.31 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): This has been a series of scintillating speeches, in which some of the contributions of Back Benchers have excelled those of the Front-Bench spokesmen on both sides, barring that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). The Secretary of State for the still-existing Department of Trade and Industry managed to come up with the most appalling speech that I have heard in my brief time in the House. It was totally devoid of content, and lacking in humour, commitment and delivery. It was the speech of a man who is on his way out—of a shadow of a man in an invisible Department who is gradually disappearing in his own rhetoric. Much has been said about *The Observer* mace competition. Hon. Members of all parties had ideas about what could be done with the mace when they heard the Secretary of State's speech. Although the Department is not yet closed, the Secretary of State could certainly have hung the "out to lunch" sign round his neck on the basis of today's performance.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) pointed out, it is interesting that the right hon. Gentleman's speech lacked any real political or economic content. There was not a single word about monetarism from either the right hon. Gentleman or any of his hon. Friends. The days of philosophical dogma that

so laced the Secretary of State's speeches in his previous incarnations no longer seem to be with us. The right hon. Gentleman seems devoid of even the sparse intellectual covering of his earlier years.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) then spoke. He has two sorts of speech, depending on the leadership position. His first sort of speech is made by the rebel, with his mane flowing, who puts forward what he alleges are alternatives to his Government's policies. But no more of that now. When the Government have a 15 or 16 per cent. deficit in the opinion polls and rising, the right hon. Gentleman can see the main chance. This afternoon we heard an attempt to ingratiate himself with a number of his Back-Bench colleagues. That was unfortunate, because sometimes the right hon. Gentleman has something to say——

Mr. Butterfill: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have been regaled by the speeches of many hon. Members today, but when are we going to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen)? All he is doing is commenting on other people's speeches.

Mr. Allen: I shall not do the hon. Gentleman the courtesy of discussing his remarks, but I should like to make one or two comments about what the alternative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Henley, said. It seemed to be a sort of confession. When he was Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Gentleman was one of the main proponents of intervention, enterprise zones and development corporations. He was involved with the famous Toxteth programme in Liverpool and the garden festival. But all that was put aside today when he tried to align himself with a slightly broader church in his party, so that by the time of the next leadership election the rich man's Sir Anthony Meyer hopes to have positioned himself slightly nearer the centre of his party than he is now.

The right hon. Gentleman had an interesting concept about the Bank of England, picking up the idea of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the cry Blaby, not too long ago. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the possibility of a central bank for the United Kingdom. However, there is a problem with that concept because a central bank is designed to ensure that a cohort—a board of directors for European banks—can decide the direction of monetary and fiscal policy, but on a non-elected basis.

The right hon. Gentleman found it difficult to sell that concept to his Back-Bench colleagues. He tried to do so in an ingenious way by linking it to the concept of national sovereignty, suggesting that a divorced non-political bank would enhance the sovereignty of this country. Unfortunately, we all know too well that when the Deutsche Bank changes its interest rates, it is literally a matter of minutes if not seconds before our Chancellor of the Exchequer follows——

Mr. Quentin Davies: So that the House may follow the hon. Gentleman's argument, did he mean the Deutsche Bank or the Bundesbank?

Mr. Allen: It was a mistake to give way to the hon. Gentleman. He has already had his 20 minutes or longer, even to the extent of irritating the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark).

The Government's amendment to our motion shows their constant theme of the alleged success of their policies. The policies and successes that are outlined in that amendment include:

"the highest rate of economic growth . . . the largest increase in manufacturing productivity . . . and record levels of industrial output".

That is fine. I am pleased that those things have been placed on our agenda. The only problem is that the base on which those figures are calculated has been fiddled to an extent that would do credit to the former Secretary of State for Employment, also the former Secretary of State for Social Services, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler). I repeat that they are fiddled figures on a fiddled base. Any consideration of the full extent of what has happened during the Tory locust years —the ten and a half wasted years—reveals that in the first two years, under the Chancellorship of the present Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, almost one quarter of this country's manufacturing base was eradicated.

Perhaps I can help Conservative Members by explaining that in words that they may understand. It is rather like a cricket team trying to improve its batting averages by taking out the scores of all its bowlers. Of course, that is not so. It is sleight of hand. In calculating the base over the past four or five years, the Government have come up with statistics which are more beneficial and flattering than is really the case.

One of the Secretary of State's most interesting remarks this afternoon was:

"The deficit . . . is not a sign of industrial weakness."

As an economic indicator, what is a deficit if not a sign of either industrial weakness or strength? It simply means that our manufacturing base is no longer strong enough to ensure that we export as much as we import. We live or die by our ability to export manufactures. Those are the sentiments, if not the words——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Of the CBI.

Mr. Allen: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated me correctly. I am sure that the CBI will not mind if I quote it:

"To help close the overall deficit gap, an increasing proportion of United Kingdom production, especially manufacturing production, will need to be devoted to exports or to import substitution . . . to pay for goods, (especially consumer goods) we cannot supply, the UK must trade manufactures (nearly 60 per cent. of all UK trade)".

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): How does the hon. Gentleman explain the Japanese trade deficit throughout the 1950s?

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) referred to that. Japan is benefiting from domestic investment in that period. It built up a strong domestic base so that it could operate both import and export strategies. That is why Japan is now in a position where it can invest in this country and repatriate dividends and capital to the benefit of its indigenous industry. I thank the hon. Gentleman for helping me to make that point.

In the amendment, the Government also refer to a fall in unemployment. Once again, congratulations to the Government on obtaining that fall in unemployment. But from what base? When will unemployment be reduced to the level that pertained when they came into office? When they came into office they had the tremendous benefits of

[Mr. Allen]

North sea oil, which was coming on stream, and the credit boom which they unleashed in the latter part of their 10 years in office. Many of the jobs which they boast that they have created are part-time and cannot replace the sort of jobs taken out of the economy during the previous few years.

The amendment also refers to bearing down on inflation.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Before the hon. Gentleman moves on from the fall in unemployment, he might care to tell the House that in his constituency during the past 12 months, unemployment has fallen by 17·2 per cent. Why did he not tell us about that?

Mr. Allen: I am pleased that the Minister draws attention to the efforts of Labour-controlled Nottingham city council and Nottinghamshire county council. Their economic development committees have put some effort into mitigating the worst effects of the Government's policies. It has been one of their main objectives. They have been successful and I am proud of them. I know that the people of Nottingham are proud of them, too. They just wish that they had a little more help from the Government and their economic policies.

Admittedly, the Government have not had much chance to bear down on inflation as they have been in power for only ten and a half years. The time has come for the judge and jury of the Government's economic policies —Mr. Nigel Lawson's words, not mine—to return the verdict and deliver the sentence. The former Home Office Minister, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), may hear me speak in support of a sentence of capital punishment on the Government in respect of inflation. They have been unable to contain inflation, and the electorate will pass that sentence at the next election.

Given all the advantages that the Government have had over the past 10 years, their record is disastrous. It would be disastrous in other times, let alone times when billions upon billions of pounds have been available to the public sector to reinvest. What happened to that money? The Government have paid it back in early repayments of debt. It has been used in the City for further speculation and circulation in the international money markets. The money has been completely wasted by the Government. We have the cheek to pretend to offer financial advice to eastern Europe, under the misnomer of the know-how fund. How we have the nerve to tell those countries how to run a free economy, I do not know.

How does the stuff that the Government have produced affect individuals and real people? One of the main ways is through the interest rate, not merely because every percentage point that goes on the interest rate hits small and large employers alike and makes their lives difficult. More directly it hits individuals who are trying their best to buy their homes.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer gave me a helpful parliamentary answer today. I asked him to list the average mortgage in each region and then to list the increase per week in the payments made by people trying to buy their homes. In the east midlands, the average mortgage is £34,700. The increase per week from June 1988 to today in my constituency and in the east midlands is £24·59 per week. That applies also to the constituency of the Minister, although he does not appear to be interested in it. There has been a 76 per cent. increase in interest repayments by business. Business is now borrowing.

In the past when business was borrowing it was good news. It borrowed to finance investment. Now it is engaging in what is called distress borrowing to meet repayments on previous loans. Businesses are in serious trouble unless they can get their hands on the money to repay loans. Those are the effects of high interest rates on business and on us.

We often hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his minions talk about financing the deficit. It is clear that we are financing the deficit. Every home owner, small business man and large company is funding the deficit. It is not a negative or neutral term; it means that we are paying through the nose because of the Government's economic failure, despite the best efforts of individuals to keep the economy, their business or livelihood alive and to keep a roof over their heads.

It appears that some people are doing well— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. When the hon. Gentleman is addressing the House, it is discourteous for a meeting to be held simultaneously.

Mr. Allen: I understand the need to caucus in the Conservative party. Things are very bad indeed. Conservative Members may be discussing a potential leadership candidate, whether it is the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who has just come into the Chamber—perhaps he has just returned from paying his high poll tax—or the right hon. Member for Henley, whom we heard make a leadership bid earlier tonight. There are several other runners, but you should be tolerant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the difficulties of the Conservative party.

Now that I have the full attention of the House, I inform hon. Gentlemen that I was discussing the large banks. Lloyds, Barclays and the Midland bank do not seem to be doing too badly. In the recent past those banks have lent money all round the world to every tinpot dictator who wanted the latest tank and the biggest bang possible in his area. They have gone into debt to no great benefit of the people in those countries, and defaulted on their loans. Now all those banks are queueing up to say that they have bad debts and that they want "provision" against those debts. Again, that is a high-falutin' technical term which means that they want a handout. It means that they want us, the taxpayers, to put money in their kitty because they have been unable to lend properly.

There should be "provision" for people in Nottingham who, every week, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer told me, pay another £24 on their mortgage. As my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) said when he gave Scottish examples, there should be provision for small business people who are being bankrupted by the thousand. There should also be provision for large companies, which are the backbone of the national economy.

These things will come about only with a change of policy. Most of us know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and some of his team are trying to drag the Government towards the middle ground. They are trying to make them become more neo-Keynesian before the next

general election. I wish them well, because I would not want them to fail on that basis. Their success means too much for our people, the Health Service, education and other services. However, as they creep in that direction they will be drawn back to the true faith by the Ayatollah in No. 10.

That means that the only way in which we shall make significant changes in economic policy in this country and ensure that economic policy is conducted for, and on behalf of, the people, is to throw the Conservative Government out of office. We must elect a Government committed to investment, research and development, training, education and rebuilding the economy in alliance with the CBI, trade unions and all the other interest groups. In that way we shall ensure that our country has a future, not just a miserable past 10 years.

7.52 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I do not wish to make a long speech. No Back Bencher should need to speak for more than 10 minutes because if one cannot say what one wishes in that time, it is likely that it will not be worth hearing. Therefore those who follow me can get ready to speak.

As was said in "A Tale of Two Cities", we face the best of times and the worst of times. We face a most interesting period in this country. In the past few years we have been brought up with two great economies of the world standing astride us like colossi, Germany and Japan. Those times are changing, as times do.

Japan has gone on and on because it was lucky enough to lose the second world war and be able to rebuild the country and economy based on the self-sacrifice of its people. In addition, the Japanese looked years ahead, as we in this country must do. Their investment is not, like ours, thought of in terms of six to 12 months being a long time. They look five to 10 years ahead. This country must face up to that in due course. However, there is no doubt that things are changing for the Japanese. Their interest rate structure is changing.

When the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service was in Japan about 12 months ago, Japanese companies could raise money at 1·75 per cent. Now they have to raise money at about 5 or 6 per cent., and the way things are going, the interest rate will go even higher.

West Germany has stood astride Europe for almost 20 years and now it wants to build a greater Germany because it wants to make the German volk one volk again. I am not making a political point, but an economic point. Now that the wall is coming down, West Germany has a social budget of $5,000 million this year. People are pouring over its borders at 2,000 a week because the social payments in West Germany are six times those in East Germany.

That means that the deutschmark, which had a good and solid as gold basis, is now becoming a bit more drosslike, as are the currencies of many European countries, including our own. West Germany's interest rate structure is also changing. Therefore, the western world, which really means America, Japan and Germany, is changing around us. The problems that we face are profound and based not just on the British Government's policy, but on the fact that circumstances are changing, and are likely to change in an inflationary way.

Japanese interest rates have changed by more than 2 percentage points in the last 12 months—from 3 to 5·5 per cent.—which means more than it does in this country. In Germany, because of the mad, headlong rush to another and greater Germany, interest rates are also changing. Our interest rates start off from a much higher base and we must be willing to stand firm. In the next few months, Germany and Japan may put up interest rates by at least 1 percentage point. That may be difficult for them, but I believe that another 1 or 2 percentage points on the interest rates in this country could be catastrophic for industries and home owners.

We should be willing to let the pound take some of the strain. As Rab Butler said, before many people here were alive—unfortunately, I was, because it was about 30 years ago—we must export or die. If we are unable to export, we will die. When we think of the tens of billions of pounds that we have had to spare in this country, we must be willing to say that we must build things better. Although some Opposition Members may not agree, one problem that we face in this country is that some people have taken advantage of the more enlightened policy on competition and success being allowed to succeed.

It is difficult to accept it when, as in the past 12 months, senior management give themselves a 28 per cent. rise and tell others that a 7 per cent. rise will ruin the very industries that they serve. If sacrifices have to be made in order for us to kill inflation, they should be made not just by those at the bottom, but by those who lead. It is obscene when those in industry give themselves 28 per cent. rises and then say to those to whom they say they cannot afford to give a 7 per cent. rise, that this country is going to rack and ruin.

I have a similar message for the unions. It may be a good idea to talk about a 37-hour week. There is nothing wrong with that as long as that 37-hour week is genuinely productive. However, if we give ourselves a 37-hour week, without the productivity to go with it, all we do is put up manufacturing costs by 20 per cent. This country cannot stand that.

Therefore, regardless of whether we have a Labour or Conservative Government, we are at a genuine threshold. In Japan and Germany things are on the change. We do not want to be the nut in the cracker.

Top managers should resist giving themselves rises of 28 per cent. and workers on the shop floor should recognise that we must export or die. We must produce or die. We must make sure that the prices that the Government can influence, whether they be rail, water, electricity or gas prices, are influenced in the right way. It is no good people putting up rail fares by 20 per cent. one year and 15 per cent. the next, saying that they are doing their bit to make the railways competitive.

It is no good telling people that it is all right if electricity or gas prices rise by the rate of inflation plus *x* per cent. It is sheer humbug and nonsense to talk about the rate of inflation plus a percentage, because that affects everybody. A 5 per cent. increase in gas charges means one thing to me, but it means something quite different to someone on a low income. A 2 per cent. increase in rail fares may be an irritation to me, but it is a catastrophe to people on lower incomes. Percentages are like bikinis: what they show is super, but what they conceal is vital. People tend to forget that it is nonsense to complain to a millionaire about a 1 per cent. increase when to someone on social security it is a disaster.

[Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark]

If we face the uncertain and dangerous future together, we can do something, but if we think only in terms of mean, vile party advantage, the future that we face, whoever wins, is grim indeed.

8.1 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am exceptionally disappointed tonight to see that no members of the Scottish National party have seen fit to come to the Chamber to listen to the debate. The motion says:

"this House condemns the Government's economic failure which has brought the highest interest rates, the worst trade deficit and the highest inflation of the United Kingdom's major competitors; is concerned at the rising number of business bankruptcies and redundancies and at the investment cutbacks in the run-up to 1992; deplores the further reductions in support for regional investment, research and development, and export help; and calls for an investment budget for industry and training."

I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that that is particularly relevant to the people of Scotland, so I must draw attention to the fact that the seats usually occupied by Members of the Scottish National party are vacant and bare.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend has been here throughout the debate and he will know that no member of the Scottish National party has been present today. Not one has contributed or even shown his face in the Chamber. I have no idea whether their constituents are aware of that.

Mr. Graham: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I am delighted that a statement has been made today about Scotland's lowland airports. I, with my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams), represent Glasgow airport. I am delighted that the decision has now been made, so that we can get on with the business of ensuring that Glasgow has one of the finest airports in the world. We in that area suffer from a high level of unemployment, inflicted by the Government, and the Government should at least attempt to restore some of the jobs that have been lost since 1979.

Therefore, I welcome the ending of the uncertainty, and I hope that the Government will put in the necessary infrastructure so that Renfrew district council can continue to improve the area. I hope that we shall be given the finance that is necessary to ensure that the developments meet the needs of the local community.

Environmental considerations are high on the Government's agenda, and they have said that they will take into account the pollution that many people in the shadow of the flight paths over Renfrewshire, Glasgow and Bearsden are worried about. That may not be such good news for the folk in Prestwick, but I understand that the people of Ayrshire have been given an assurance that the Government will do their best to ensure that there will be no job losses or redundancies and that they will work to ensure that Prestwick remains open. I hope that I shall not see Prestwick closed in a couple of years' time. I hope that the Minister takes on board and ensures that Renfrew district has the necessary finance to regenerate the local economy. That also applies to Strathclyde regional council. I am delighted that something has happened.

But who are the Government kidding when they say that everything in Britain is rosy and wonderful? We have a massive trade deficit of £20 billion, yet the Secretary of State shrugs it off, saying that we are doing fine. The Prime Minister is as happy as Larry because she has only the poll tax to worry about. It would be laughable were it not for the millions who are unemployed.

Tonight we have heard about some of the lucky people who have jobs, but in my constituency highly skilled and highly trained individuals in many disciplines such as engineering and teaching cannot find a job. Nor can they afford bikes. Some of those who have got on their bikes and come down here are languishing homeless on the streets of London. They cannot afford housing, so they cannot get a job. Many of them have skills, but they have listened too much to the rubbish that the Government are putting out. I wish that the man who had coined the phrase "on your bike" was here tonight, because I have a bike for him and I will make sure he rides it all the way to France and perhaps even further.

I remember not long ago discussing the Scottish economy, when a Minister used the wonderful phrase "the engine of free enterprise". I am sure that all my hon. Friends remember that phrase. Conservative Members must have worked hard to find that one. Listen to this account of the engine of free enterprise. The Rover deal cost Britain millions. Then there was the sale of the royal ordnance factories, one of which is in my constituency. That was one of the biggest robberies since Sir Francis Drake was a privateer sailing about the main. The Sundance Kid could learn a lesson from Conservative Members.

We have seen the privatisation of water and British Telecom. That is the engine of free enterprise—give everything that belongs to the people of Britain to the Government's friends for free. But the next Labour Government—and there will be one—will make sure that their pockets are empty. The Government have another think coming. I can assure them that the people of Britain will have had enough of their policies. I request not to see an engine of free enterprise.

At one time Scotland was known as the workhouse of the world. The shipyards in the Clyde employed 50,000 men and women. The noise heard was the beating of steel and of men working. They came home at night to their families with wages so that their kids could go to school with decency.

Working men and women want the right to earn a wage. They do not want this claptrap about low pay and part-time jobs. They want full-time employment and they want money which gives them dignity and allows them to live properly. They want the right to be able to pay their mortgages. They do not want massive interest charges which throw them into mortgage misery.

Has the Minister ever suffered mortgage misery? Does he know what it is like not to be able to pay his rent on time? Has he ever received a letter through the door telling him that the rent is behind? Has the Minister ever had a letter from the electricity board telling him to pay the electricity bill in two or three days or the supply will be turned off? People do not have sufficient money because they are in low-paid or part-time employment, or because of the miserable pittance of a benefit that the Minister was so proud to boast about tonight when I asked him a question. He said that the unemployed are lucky to get benefit.

By God, what a sick answer to people who wish that they had a Government committed to employment, to

decent benefits and to a decent standard of living, so that children can be educated. People want to tell their children that, after their education is finished, they can walk with their heads held high into meaningful employment. They want to educate their kids so that they can have a position in society and can live a full life and die in comfort.

From the cradle to the grave, Governments have a responsibility, but this Government seem to duck all their responsibilities and the Minister's statement tonight—"They are lucky to be unemployed and getting benefit"—makes me sick.

My constituency is relatively affluent. There is one area where very wealthy people live and there are other areas where poor people live, but although they are poor in material things, they are strong in spirit. They have not died in their thousands. When jobs are advertised, they run in their hundreds, and they queue up for them. Therefore, the Minister should not think that the thousands of unemployed people in my constituency want to be unemployed, because they do not. They desperately want and need jobs, and they will queue up for them in the stinking, bucketing rain that we get in Scotland. They will stand in the miserably cold weather for hours on end waiting for a job. The Government have given them miserable stinking benefits and have even cut benefits.

As British people, we are demanding—I say "we" because I hope that I am one of them—a new economic agenda. We need a new social agenda and a new international agenda for our country. In the 1990s, Britain needs a Government who will get the nation back on the right track, and the Opposition offer that.

The Scottish Development Agency has an important part to play in Scotland in assessing and regenerating our communities. I understand that the Government wish to sell off the Hillington estate—a great big privatisation of the sort that the Government love so much—but if they sell that estate, I hope that the money is given back to the community. I have no objection to the scheme, because it is in Renfrew district, but I hope that the money gained will be used to get the thousands of unemployed people back to work.

I also have no objection to the Inverclyde enterprise zone, which is so beloved of the Government and of the Minister. That is in my constituency, and I wish that the Government would put in the infrastructure that is so badly needed. Whether they like it or not, that means cash—hard money—to help in that.

I shall not labour the point too long, but I have heard tonight how wonderful things are supposed to be in the economy. I shall read a summary of the most recent Fraser of Allander economic commentary which was published in December. It gave a general summary of the economic state of Scotland and two central points are made in it. First, although Scotland's economic performance has been improving——

Mr. Roger King: Exactly.

Mr. Graham: The hon. Gentleman can intervene if he wants.

First, although Scotland's economic performance has been improving, there are widespread fears of a recession in the business world. Secondly, the Government's policy of high interest rates is having a particularly harsh effect on Scotland, given that we have a high proportion of industries susceptible to fluctuations in interest rates. Scotland is more heavily dependent than the United Kingdom on the production of investment goods, and on construction, which makes investment of great significance. Expensive borrowing therefore causes severe problems.

The commentary refers to other studies carried out by—wait for it—the Scottish chambers of commerce business survey and the CBI in Scotland. The commentary said that the latest chambers of commerce survey

"shows . . . virtually every different sector showing a marked degree of pessimism about immediate economic prospects . . . A balance of −35 per cent. on business confidence is the lowest ever recorded by the SCCBS, far lower even than that recorded in 1986 in the aftermath of the collapse in the price of oil and the recession which resulted in Scotland".

The pessimism expressed in the survey is the worst since the surveys began in 1984 and is in line with the CBI's survey, in which manufacturing optimism was said to be at its lowest level for seven years.

I have already told the House tonight that Strathclyde regional council, which covers half of Scotland, has lost more than half its manufacturing jobs—166,000 losses. What an incredible and appalling record. How can we ever hope to improve export potential if we have such a prodigious loss of people and skills, and people languishing unemployed and on the dole? It is an indictment of any society.

When does the Minister intend to visit with me the unemployed production workers in my constituency, who are now living on unemployment benefit—which he tells them they are lucky to be receiving? When will he tell them that they can get back to work and produce for the good of this country? When will he tell their children that he will provide meaningful education—not Mickey Mouse employment training projects, but apprenticeships, university places and college places—to give them the opportunity to compete in the 1990s and not to drive them back to Victorian conditions?

The Minister has a responsibility to stop kidding people and to stop pulling the wool over their eyes. The Government should resign and let us get on with the business. Let us have a general election and I am sure that the people of Scotland and England will throw the Government on the scrap heap. That is the way to get folk back to work, to get trade and industry back to work and to get the deficit down. Let us say halloo and hurrah and get rid of this Government.

8.19 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): To follow the thought that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) has just expressed, the debate is not about unemployment. It is significant that in 1990 the Opposition have not tabled a motion on unemployment in the United Kingdom. The simple reason is this Government's major success in reducing unemployment. I represent West Lancashire and a town that is one of the Government's major success stories. Unemployment in my constituency has fallen by about 3,500 during the past two and a half years. There has been a massive influx of new companies and new investment. Skelmersdale was regarded as a black spot in the north of England, but its prosperity is growing. New houses, offices, shops and factories are being built and the town is facing the future with confidence.

The work force is prepared to be flexible. It is not dominated by old-style trade unionism. Most of the

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

factories in Skelmersdale are no longer dominated by the trade unions, and the workers have been prepared to accept new and flexible working conditions. They are happy with them and they are well looked after by employers who care about them. We have been able to attract large amounts of overseas investment, particularly from Japan and the middle east.

This debate focuses attention on the balance of payments, interest rates and inflation. Labour Members understand about taxing people and spending money. Their sympathies lie with those in the community who earn low wages. They do not understand that wealth creation leads to the provision of the welfare services that make life in our community worth living and improve the lot of the less privileged.

The Government have had to take difficult decisions which have not been shirked. Inflation is a major problem. It was endemic during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Whenever prosperity increases and the standard of living improves, as it did during the late 1980s, we suck in huge quantities of imports. We have to slow down an overheated economy and introduce anti-inflationary policies.

Interest rates have to be the major weapon against inflation. It is unfortunate that the Government have had to choose such a weapon, but it is the only major weapon that will lead to significant changes. We do not like having to increase interest rates. It makes us unpopular, and it leads to additional mortgage interest repayments. But the Government had to take that difficult decision to improve the standard of living and deal with the major economic problem—inflation.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. Friend referred to the better prospects for people in his constituency. Does he agree that they reflect the great advantages that the north in general is experiencing? The Building Employers Confederation has recently published a bulletin headed "North South Divide Reversed." It points out that member firms of the south are expecting a fall in output but that in the north and in Scotland they expect either a stable or an expanding work load. The Manchester chamber of commerce and industry carried out a survey in the north-west which illustrated the increasing confidence and the competitive advantages of the north-west. The Bolton chamber of commerce carried out a survey headed "Firms on the up and up." It points out that the economic fortunes of Bolton firms have taken a welcome turn for the better. Does that not paint a much better and brighter picture than that painted by the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham)?

Mr. Hind: I endorse what my hon. Friend says. I am delighted that prospects are improving in Bolton. It is a symbol of the general improvement in the north-west of England.

People have to realise that inflationary pressures result from their spending—not only from their home expenditure but from every other kind. That applies particularly to local government. Local councils do not accept that their expenditure has an impact on the economy of the country as a whole and that their overspending must be made good either by the taxpayer or the ratepayer, which in turn has inflationary consequences.

The major problem is our balance of trade. The fact that we suck in large quantities of imports is inflationary. However, we need to expand the size of the British manufacturing base, so we need those imports. During the early 1980s, the economy began to respond in many ways, but we did not succeed in expanding our manufacturing base.

Investment is at record levels. Exports are increasing and moving towards closing the balance of trade gap. We must give as much help as we can to manufacturing industry. I hope that Treasury Ministers will consider changes to the tax system to provide tax allowances for manufacturing equipment. Corporation tax relief will not lead to tax allowances being given where they are most needed. It will not lead to the greatest good for our economy. It might lead to increased dividends and salaries for directors, but help should be directed where it is most needed.

We must continue to attract inward investment. There is an organisation in the north-west called Inward. It does a sterling job round the world in attracting new industry to this country. The results in my constituency are typical of the work that it has done. It has attracted companies from Japan and elsewhere in the far east, from the Lebanon and from the United States. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is in the Chamber. When he is examining the budgets of organisations that attract inward investment, I hope that he will remember that that organisation in the north-west merits a high budget, that it is doing sterling work and that it will produce good rewards.

As for import substitution, cars represent a large slice of the balance of payments problem. I cannot underestimate the importance of attracting to this country the Nissans, the Toyotas and the Mitsubishis that will build cars using British components and British workers and that will attract money into the British economy at the same time replacing cars that are now imported from Japan. Import substitution will help us a great deal and narrow the trade imbalance. I welcome such initiatives.

When my right hon. Friend next meets the French Trade Minister, I hope that he will bear in mind her speech yesterday, as reported in the press, in which she suggested that Japanese car firms based in Britain will face difficulties over importing into the Community—that spurious reasons will be found to prevent Japanese firms based in Britain from exporting to the Community. I hope that that will be fought tooth and nail and that we will ensure that the French are not allowed to impede us in this way. Perhaps the good lady could look at the 70 Japanese-French firms that are based there. What is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander, and their exports to the United Kingdom and the rest of the Community should be treated in exactly the same way. These are important factors.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will also consider the imbalance in trade with Japan. Japan's is still a very closed economy and that country is potentially one of the best markets in the world for British goods. That is not only my view; it is shared by the Americans. Last week, President Bush made it very clear in his summit conference with the Japanese Prime Minister in California that there has to be some movement on the part of the Japanese. We have

made a great deal of headway into that market, but the questions of seats on the Japanese stock exchange, changes in the pricing of whisky imported into Japan, and so on, leave us with a very big trade imbalance on which to work. The Japanese must realise that, when we have free trade throughout the world that underpins the whole of the EC and the world economy, they have to play the game and join in. They cannot close their market, one of the most important in the world, to manufactured goods from Britain and other European countries.

Labour Members have tabled this motion. They can raise taxation; their party is known as the party of high taxation, so they know how to do that. They can spend money, because we hear over and over again in this Chamber promises to spend money raised from the taxpayer. But they are incapable of creating wealth. They proved that they were great borrowers during their last period in office when they had to call in the International Monetary Fund. We have avoided that.

We see different answers to the problems that Labour Members have mentioned in this debate and we do not see increased Government subsidies to the regions as the only way of reorganising the economy. Nor do we see handing over the administration of the economy to civil servants, people with no experience of running industry or commerce—people who are essentially administrators and who do not have a great deal to do with the profit motive—as the way to establish British prosperity in the future. On "The World at One" a few months ago, the Leader of the Opposition when he was asked what answer he had to the problems of inflation said that he did not know. That probably typifies Opposition policy when it comes to getting to grips with our present difficulties.

Finally, I want to refer to the Opposition's position on community charge, which in many respects typifies their lack of understanding of basic financing. In the county of Lancashire this year the Labour-controlled county council have increased their spending—this is before the community charge comes in—by 17·5 per cent. I have recently addressed meetings in various parts of the county in which I have asked any member of the audience who has had a wage increase of 17·5 per cent. this year to stand up. In the seven meetings at which I have spoken in the past fortnight nobody has stood up.

Yet those same people are being asked to find extra money to pay the increased levies that the councils are making by raising their spending. Those people are living in circumstances in which inflation is just below 8 per cent. and they are getting wage or salary increases at or about that level. The councils say to the public that they must raise the money, but their understanding of sensible planning and running any kind of organisation is lacking.

The community charge is very much under attack but the problem will not be solved by taking away education from local authorities. That is because, taking the rate support grant and the uniform business rate, in most cases the sums just about add up to the cost of education. Nor will the answer be found by throwing more money at the problem, because that money would be taken from the taxpayer and the burden of inflation would be increased. Furthermore, it would undermine the confidence that world markets and bankers must have in our ability to manage our economy properly. It would be sending out the wrong messages to the world.

One of the major principles of the community charge must be accountability. By sticking to our principles on this matter and saying that local government must manage its finances properly, we are making councils accountable to the electorate. Eventually, they too will realise that if inflation is at 7·5 per cent., they cannot increase expenditure by 17·5 per cent., or 25 per cent. and expect the economy and local government to run properly. That is the message that we must get over.

We have problems in the economy but, as in 1985-86, this Government can handle them. The Government got over the problems of the decline in the value of the pound and in the price of oil. If we are positive in our thinking, advance our attack on the balance of payments and inflation, and maintain downward pressure on inflation, I am sure that we shall succeed. The Opposition may laugh today but in two years' time when we get to elections they will sing an entirely different tune.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can see three hon. Members seeking to catch my eye. I understand that the first Front-Bench spokesman will seek to wind up at about ten minutes past 9, so the arithmetic is fairly obvious—35 minutes divided by three.

8.36 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I can take a hint as well as the next person, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have sat here through most of the debate and all we have heard from the Government is excuses in one form or another. They have talked about the pain that will be borne during the next year or so because of the position into which they have got us because, early in the 1980s, they quite deliberately abandoned manufacturing. Because of the disastrous policies that they pursued then with regard to manufacturing, Britain is in danger of being very seriously undermined. I know what they did to manufacturing, because I come from a manufacturing town. In the north, we lost about 30 per cent. of our manufacturing jobs, or over 1 million jobs.

The Government were warned by members of the other place. In 1984, the Lords produced a very good report on overseas trade, because they were concerned about the trade gap and what was happening. They made a number of recommendations, one of which was about interest rates. It seems to me a tragedy that the Government ignored that recommendation and continue to do so. That recommendation was clear:

> "Cheaper money would lead to more investment by small and medium sized enterprises. The Government should have more regard to the needs of industry as a borrower when they take a view on interest rates".

Quite clearly, the Government totally ignored that excellent advice.

Those of us who have constituencies in which there is still a high percentage of people employed in manufacturing—in my constituency, 45 per cent. of workers are still employed in manufacturing—are deeply concerned about this Government's single policy of using interest rates to control inflation.

We have heard excuses about the trade deficit not mattering and the current interest rates, which are the highest in Europe, having little effect. A written answer in *Hansard* on 21 June 1989 suggested that each increase of one percentage point on base rate will cost industrial companies around £0·4 billion in a full year. That is a very serious burden for industry.

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

I see examples of that almost daily in my constituency because of the Government's policy of high interest rates. The employers in my constituency recognise just how damaging it has been to them and they are quite open about it. In the past two months my constituency has lost more than 400 jobs in manufacturing, 150 of them at Dorlux—which I mentioned in an application under Standing Order No. 20 a couple of weeks ago. The employer blamed high interest rates. Sixty jobs went at Crowthers, a subsidiary of Coloroll, a company which is going through some difficulties. On 23 January 1990, an article in the *Financial Times* blamed "casualties caused by the collapse of the British housing market" for job losses at Coloroll. Even Conservative Members would not deny that the housing market is in serious difficulties caused largely by the high interest rates and the fact that people can no longer afford to buy.

Recently 20 jobs were lost at John Frederick, which makes UPVC windows and 30 at a local textile firm and 150 at Fredenburg, another firm in the Calder valley.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: I shall not give way, as there is not sufficient time. The Minister will have plenty of time to reply to the debate. I tried to intervene five or six times in the Secretary of State's speech, but he refused to give way, and he had plenty of time.

Just this morning I heard that Pland Hygena, a small engineering firm, has announced another 50 redundancies. The employer blamed high interest rates.

David Marshall, the managing director of a well-known firm in Halifax recently said:

"high interest rates will affect sales of building materials over the next 12 months".

and his firm recently made a number of redundancies. Another employer from a well-known textile firm in Halifax also said that the firm had planned to expand its factory because it had quite good order books, but because of the high cost of money it could not borrow so the expansion would not go ahead.

Several of my hon. Friends have mentioned that the CBI has criticised the Government's lack of an economic policy. The January 1990 quarterly industrial trends survey published by the CBI stated:

"Business confidence has declined further, on balance, for the fifth consecutive survey."

That does not make good reading. It continued:

"Respondents indicated that they were less optimistic than four months ago".

Despite the Minister's huffing and puffing, his friends have deserted him rather quickly. I would argue that all the people I have quoted would normally support a Conservative Government.

The textile industry, which is a constituency interest, has really gone through the mill. Textile companies have really had a shakeout, but they fought hard and did everything the Government asked them to do. They re-equipped and slimmed down their work force almost to non-existence. Conservative Members cannot say that the textile industry has a militant work force that asks for too much, as some of the pay rates are scandalous.

The textile industry is on the verge of another recession. What help does it get from the Government? In a recent debate on the IMF and the Silberston report, the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, who is a well known free-marketeer, told us that he did not think that such a protectionist measure was any good for jobs. Professor Silberston warned that 33,000 jobs could go and Peter Booth, the national secretary of the textile trade group of the Transport and General Workers Union reckoned that the figure could be nearer 100,000. If that happens, the textile industry will be wiped out in my constituency and probably in West Yorkshire. Job losses on that scale would have a devastating effect on the lives and livelihoods of my constituents.

When the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was making his leadership bid speech, he hinted that wage costs were partly to blame for current economic difficulties. I have just received a report from the West Yorkshire low pay unit. I recognise that we are the low pay capital of the north, but some of the figures are pretty appalling. One in eight women working full time earn less than £100 per week and nearly one third of women working full time in West Yorkshire earn less than £120 a week. One in six men earn less than £150 a week, and if overtime is excluded, the figure becomes one in four. If one compares those figures with the national average male wage of £269 a week, one gets some idea of the low pay problem in West Yorkshire. Three thousand men and women in my constituency earn less than £100 a week.

I recognise that time is running out, so I shall conclude my speech. Reference has been made to training, and the right hon. Member for Henley blamed everything on the Labour Government. That is disgraceful, after 11 years of missed opportunities. The Government have given us nothing but YTS, CP and now ET schemes. I met a group of people on such a scheme. They came to my surgery the other morning and said it was a disgrace. They likened it to a displaced persons' camp. Nobody knew what they were doing. They told one man to sit in front of a computer and asked another man who had been in engineering all his life whether he would like to learn double entry bookkeeping, and then nobody came near him for a week.

To return to the trade deficit and the future of manufacturing, in 1980 our trade with Europe in manufacturing was roughly in balance. Today, the deficit is about £14 billion. That is an appalling failure by any yardstick.

The Government have failed us, and after the disgraceful speech by the Secretary of State today, it appears that they will continue to fail us. The House of Lords recognised the Government's failure. It said that a "sense of national purpose" was required and then made some international comparisons. The Government would sell the royal palaces if they could. The report said that we should create

"Links between different groups in society".

We have had 10 years of union-bashing and deregulation. The report said that "the long term view" was essential. That is anathema to the Government. It referred to education and training, which the Government have downgraded. It stressed that the Government should have an industrial policy, but we have heard the Secretary of State say that that is not on the agenda, as he believes in deregulation and no planning whatsoever. It talked about barriers to trade and quotas being necessary in some cases, but the other week we heard the multi-fibre arrangement might go.

If we compare what the Lords thought we should have with what we have heard in today's debate, we have no reason for optimism about the balance of trade deficit. All Opposition Members agree that it will get considerably worse before it gets better, because the Government are not for changing.

8.50 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Apart from a short meal break, I have sat listening to the debate for four and three quarter hours. I have been surprised that, on a day when Her Majesty's Opposition initiated the debate, we have not had a contribution from a Labour Member defining Labour policy on trade, industry, the balance of payments or any other problem facing the economy. We have had nothing but criticism of the Government.

We do not know how a future Labour Government would address the challenges that face the nation. In the coming 10 years or more, we shall take steps to ensure that we continue to sustain economic growth. That process will continue so long as the Government do not lose their nerve and so long as they retain their present stringent economic policies.

We got a glimpse of what might be perceived as Opposition policy from the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who referred to what I thought was a national plan mark 2. No doubt, should Labour become the Government, we would have something of that sort, which would be more bureaucracy as an excuse for doing nothing.

The solution proposed by the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) was to put our problems on to a European agenda. He seemed to suggest that, if that did not solve them, we should make them the subject of a world agenda. I admire his optimism and desire for a world solution to our problems, but I doubt whether that will turn out to be official Labour party policy.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) also failed to provide a semblance of Labour party policy. As he is the official Opposition spokesman, one would have thought that he would adduce the sort of policies that Labour would present should they become the Government. Instead, we got from him what might be described as negative policy.

Hon. Members will recall that I intervened in his speech to ask about Labour's attitude towards an important aspect of investment, that of road building. I assure the House, as a Birmingham Member, that, if we do not have a good roads system with access to the ports and other areas of manufacturing, we will die. Roads are our arteries, and we must have them. We have no desire to cover the entire countryside with six-lane motorways, but we must have a basic road infrastructure.

To their credit, the Government have embarked on a rolling programme of road building and improvement, covering 10 years and costing £12 billion. Although that is a lot of money, we must not forget that, during those 10 years, road users will contribute about £200 billion into the coffers of the Exchequer. So although in percentage terms it is a small sum, it is welcome and essential.

The official policy of the Opposition seems to be that we should do away with such a roads programme. Indeed, a commitment to that effect appears in the columns of *Hansard*. I shall make sure that all the west midlands hears about that because, as I say, without a decent roads system we will wither and die. May we be told clearly whether it really is Labour policy not to have a programme of road building and expansion? If so, Labour will be condemned at the ballot box as luddite in its approach to the challenges facing the nation. The CBI has said that, without adequate roads, it cannot guarantee that British industry can deliver the goods.

Despite our problems, our economy is moving forward. We are getting investment from all over the world. Over 100 overseas manufacturing and service companies have established in the Birmingham region. The West Midlands development agency has played a major part in bringing investment to my constituency. A German seat manufacturing company has announced its intention to establish in my area, and I feel certain that, before long, we shall have a French manufacturer of car components, followed by Italian and Japanese firms. We are becoming a multinational area for the car component industry.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. King: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way. Time is short, and others wish to take part in the debate.

The car industry in Britain is in the process of dynamic rebirth. Hon. Members who had the good fortune to visit the Rover works in my constituency at Longbridge saw a business that has been totally transformed as a result of £400 million of investment. We have in that plant state-of-the-art development and production with, especially important, state-of-the-art management-union relations. It is the first car company—the first manufacturing firm—in Britain to edge towards seven-day manufacturing around the clock. There is a temptation for the unions to accept a 37-hour week, and I hope that, when negotiations have been completed, we shall have round-the-clock working at Longbridge, because plant that remains idle for any part of the day in this cost-conscious age is not serving the nation.

I am happy to say that, as a reult of the investment in our motor industry, not only is there a six-month waiting list for some models of the new Rover 200 being built at Longbridge, but there is a 12-month waiting list for the new Land Rover Discovery being built in Solihull.

Perhaps the British disease reveals itself in that direction. Perhaps we under-estimate our ability so much that we finish up with enormously long waiting lists, and that attracts foreign competition. I hope, that as a result of new working methods, those waiting lists will be reduced and that the Rover 200 and the Land Rover Discovery will be produced in ever greater numbers and exported to all parts of the world, so earning vital income for this country.

I endorse what some hon. Members have said about Japanese car companies establishing in this country. That is happening partly because we have had an open economy. We have allowed our competitors to establish their distribution systems here. I accept that, in the short term, that may have undermined our indigenous manufacturing, but because of that open policy—not just in cars but in videos, televisions and many electronic and consumer goods—overseas manufacturers have been encouraged here. Once they have built up their bedrock of demand in Britain, they have moved their manufacturing

[Mr. King]

capability here. We have provided ourselves with a Japanese manufacturing platform from which we can export goods into the European Community.

I endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), who pointed out the problems that we are experiencing with the European Community, and principally with the French, who are claiming that the Japanese quota for cars sold in Europe must include not only those that come from Japan as built-up cars, but Japanese cars made at so-called transplant factories, in the United Kingdom. I reject that concept and feel sure that the Minister will bang the table in France and at the European Commission to make sure that a British-built car, whether it bears a Ford or a Nissan label, is regarded as a British car, rather than as a substitute for something else. I think I see the Minister for Industry nodding an assent. I take it that he is completely behind me in that matter.

Our main hope for the future—I trust that the hope will be realised—is that Britain's car industry can grow to perhaps 2 million-plus units a year by the end of this decade. That would dramatically improve our economic trading balance with the rest of the world.

Hon. Members in all parts of the House have said that as a country we do not invest enough in innovation. The Japanese invest by erecting a huge glass tower over their scientists and engineers, who try to reproduce ideas originating in the West. Sometimes they have their own ideas, but while they are also innovating, they certainly go about perfecting known engineering standards.

We do things differently. Most of our design initiatives seem to be achieved on a serviette in steak bars and round the pub. The Mini was designed in that way, as many other products have been. It is a natural way of doing things in this country, which is different from that followed elsewhere. One cannot compare one nation's ability with another's in engineering expertise, design and development. We are especially inventive, but we have let ourselves down in translating those inventions into goods that will sell.

I am reminded of the old Ferguson formula four-wheel drive car, which was designed in the 1950s. It used a four-wheel drive system which was basic, simple and effective, yet largely ignored by United Kingdom manufacturers. I have seen only one production car using it on sale—the Jensen FF, made in West Bromwich in the west midlands. Yet that same system has now been adopted by many companies in Japan and elsewhere as the formula for four-wheel drive. We could have completely dominated that market, but for a variety of reasons, including being too early on the scene, we were unable to take up the initiative—with the exception of the immortal Land Rover, which continues to sell and is in good demand.

Over the past 10 years, we have achieved a great deal in completely reforming our training systems. We must now go further because of the demand for higher skills. I am convinced that the Government's initiative in developing training and enterprise councils throughout the country will play a major and significant role in providing the training and skills that we desperately need for tomorrow. The challenges are great, but the country is set fair.

8.59 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), because he read his Central Office brief on economics for fourth-formers very eloquently. I ask him only why, if the Government have been so successful with the motor car industry, the deficit of trade in motor cars and components has increased so steadily under this Government. Why are we in that situation if the industry has been so successful?

The hon. Gentleman has illustrated the usual rule of Governments in a mess: when in doubt, attack the other side. He did that vigorously. This Government are now up a well-known creek with their economic policy. We might say that they are up an excretory creek without a paddle. They have got themselves into a mess from which there is no escape on current policies. The balance of payments gap cannot be closed unless British industry expands and invests, but it cannot do that with interest rates at a crippling level. The balance of payments gap cannot be closed unless the pound sterling comes down, but it will not, because interest rates are deliberately being kept high to maintain the value of the pound. They are being used as a deliberate prop for sterling. We are paying foreigners high interest rates to bring junk money to this country to close a gap in trade that we cannot close with what we produce in this country and what we sell from it.

Interest rates have become this Government's Zimmer frame, as they are all that are keeping the Government standing. The Government have no alternative. In saying that they will depend so heavily on interest rates, they are saying that they will make imports cheap by keeping the pound high and so take jobs away from this country. They will inflict pain on every house owner with a mortgage and they will try to bring down the price of houses and assets through the squeeze. They will try to squeeze demand, which will produce bankruptcies—and not only in retailing. Sock Shop is only the beginning. A series of other bankruptcies will follow, which will then knock on to the manufacturing sector. Coloroll is only the beginning there. The knock-on effect will be cataclysmic.

We are in for a miserable, bitter 12 months of economic wind-down. The Prime Minister will have a better year than Mrs. Ceausescu, but only just. It will be a pretty miserable year for all of us with the deflation that we are now entering, which will be reinforced by the coming Budget.

The Government's calculations are almost certainly cynical. They want to get the problems over in a year of misery, and then to start to relax the policy next year and to look forward to an election, probably in 1992. We are in for the longest 28 months in British history, as the Government hang on, squeeze the economy and then begin to relax as the election approaches. That is the cynical aspect. The reality is rather different.

The crisis and the figures obscure a fundamental change in our economy. We are seeing a national tragedy unfold which has been obscured by the Government's electoral gamble. We are seeing the strange death of industrial Britain. We are seeing the shrinking of our industrial base on which jobs, economic growth, our ability to pay and our way in the world all depend. It is now at a level where it is unable to do the jobs on which our economy traditionally depended.

We have not felt all the consequences so far. The oil has helped to keep us going, but we shall feel the consequences in the 1990s. The industrial base is now less than one quarter of our economy and it has lost a huge share of its home market. The home market share of British industry has come down from 83 per cent. in 1970 to 64 per cent. in 1989, which is a bigger increase and a bigger share of imports than in any comparable economy in the advanced industrial world. The base of British industry was its home base.

The share of our exports in world manufactured trade has shrunk under this Government. British industry cannot satisfy demand, yet we cannot sustain demand unless we can pay for it with what we produce. We cannot just consume and not produce. We must shift resources back to manufacturing, return to jobs in manufacturing, and rebuild the manufacturing base of the British economy. Nothing else will do the job. Services are parasitic. We cannot be hairdressers to the world or turn London into a more expensive version of Bangkok, policed by Lord Rees-Mogg, to provide that type of service to the world. Financial services will not do it, as our share of world financial services is declining as fast as our share of manufacturing trade and invisible trade will go into deficit as the profits from Japanese investment in this country return to Japan. That was the emphasis of Mr. Keegan's article in *The Guardian*, which has been quoted so often.

There is no alternative except to rebuild industry. We are in an industrial war and it is a war we are losing. We are losing to competitors who are better invested and better trained and who have some idea of co-operation between the state and industry, unlike the policy of the Department of Trade and Industry, which is as hands-off as a Saudi kleptomaniac. The dearest wish of the Minister is to get out of the business altogether. We wish him joy on his personal getting out, but not on withdrawing the Department with him.

We need to rebuild industry, and to do that we must do many things. We must improve the human capital in industry—the skills and the training. We must also expand back into the markets that we have lost, both at home and overseas, and repair the sustaining networks of suppliers and of research and development—those things from which all new development comes. That needs several things.

First, it needs a competitive exchange rate. There can be no transfer or shift back of resources into manufacturing—without which we have no future and upon which everything depends—unless the exchange rate is competitive enough to finance that shift back through market forces. Yet the pound is up in real terms since 1976, when we promised the International Monetary Fund to maintain the competitive position of British manufacturers. The pound is up 36 per cent. in real terms since then. We cannot retrieve the markets we have lost, the jobs that we have exported to the Common Market—about 1·5 million of them—and the trade we have lost unless we return to the competitive position that we were in then. There is no alternative—that is the only way to do it. It is a necessary but not sufficient condition.

Secondly, we need cheaper money to stimulate investment. We need that to invest on the scale that we have to if this country is to fight back. We need long-term thinking, not the short-term horizons that the City, with its obsession with balance sheets and takeovers, forces on British industry. Japanese industry thinks long-term. It invests to obtain a market share, it builds up through the difficulties, it obtains a network of suppliers and dealers together and then it takes over the market. We think no more than three months ahead. Everyone protects their backs because they are afraid of takeovers. Unless we think long-term we cannot get back.

We need co-operation between industry and the Government, not the hands-off approach. We are facing corporate competition between the industries and Governments of our major competitors. We must have the same co-operation. We need co-operation too to restrain the inflationary consequences of a competitive exchange rate, of economic growth, and of fighting back. We do not need a Government who heighten inflation by what they have done to electricity prices, gas prices, the introduction of the poll tax and high interest rates, and then blame the people for inflation.

What economic nonsense that is. There must be a better way of defeating inflation than putting people out of work, depressing demand and deflating the economy. I am not sure what that better way is, but there must be some co-operation that can lead us towards that better way, rather than the savage alternative that the Government are embarked on.

There is one last thing that we need and that is a Labour Government. The next 28 months will be the longest and most difficult in British history before the people can speak and tell this Government to get out because they have failed. At the end of the 28 months we shall have a Labour Government who will work for jobs, for industry and for growth, and will co-operate with the people and not discipline them by deflation and the cruel punishment of high interest rates. We need a Government who will seize the '90s to replace this Government who have wasted the '80s.

9.9 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Whatever else the House believes, everyone will accept that we have had a vigorous debate. I hope that that endorses the Opposition's choice of the important subjects for debate.

We have heard some telling speeches. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) talked of the importance of the manufacturing sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) said that time was running out for that sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) made a plea for indigenous investment. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) reprimanded his colleagues for being too hard on the Government in judging them on their inflation record after only 10 years in office. My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) expressed his horror at the Secretary of State's remark that people were lucky to get benefit when they were out of work. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) told us of the misery caused to her constituents by the Government's policies. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) highlighted the increasing number of bankruptcies because of the Government's most recent policies.

We also heard interesting speeches from Conservative Members, especially from the Birmingham area. The

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

House will take time to ponder why there has been an increase in such speeches. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) referred to the contradiction of employers paying themselves wage increases of 28 per cent. and at the same time claiming that the 7 per cent. wage increases for which their workers were asking would cause great damage to the economy. I noted particularly that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) welcomed the work of the West Midlands industrial development agency in attracting foreign investment into the area.

As is always the case, we heard some predictable speeches—from the hon. Members for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). I felt sorry for them as they scrambled round looking for arguments to support the Government. One has to give them credit for their loyalty to lost causes.

We heard an important constituency speech from the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) who made a plea for aid from the Secretary of State for organisations in Lancashire that are seeking to attract industrial development. All credit is due to the local authorities which have supported the initiatives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) made a powerful speech. He indicted the Government's record of mismanagement, not just in 1989 and 1990 but throughout the past 10 years. He further indicted the complete lack of commitment of the Department of Trade and Industry to aiding Britain's industrial recovery.

We had a somewhat limited speech from the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). As the House well knows, he has been willing to criticise in the country the Government's policy on the exchange rate mechanism and their disastrous regional policy, but unfortunately all that the House heard from him today were institutional points about more independence for the Governor of the Bank of England. But perhaps that is all we could expect from a Member who, notwithstanding his criticisms in the country of the Government, trooped through the Conservative Lobby to vote for the tax-cutting Budget in 1988 which gave rise to all the present difficulties. I believe that Conservative Members will recognise that the right hon. Gentleman's contribution was directed more at the leadership of his party than at the economic problems of the country.

The Government's problems do not stem only from recent policy decisions. The previous Chancellor of the Exchequer would not face up to the importance of the balance of payments. He said in this House:

"The risk of a resurgence of inflation is the only real problem facing the British economy today, a risk far greater than any threat arising from the deficit on the current account of the balance of payments."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 591.]

But then we were told that the balance of payments did matter. We were told that we should all be concerned about the deficit. Every month, as the balance of payments figures are produced, the excuses have been reeled out: they do not accurately reflect the true position in the economy. Indeed, the Prime Minister began to take notice of the balance of payments figures in January 1988. I remind the Minister and the Secretary of State of what she said:

"Last month's trade figures were a freak."

Then we were told, in a long explanatory note with last summer's figures, that the dock strike had distorted the trade figures. This month, in an even longer explanatory note, we were told of the erratic items that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East explained to the House earlier. In relation to this month's figures, we were told about diamonds. Diamonds always were a girl's best friend, but this month they have been a very convenient friend to the Prime Minister. However, they have been no friend to the millions of women whose families have faced more mortgage misery as the markets discount the long explanatory notes from the DTI, as the markets discount the freaks, as they discount the erratics, and as markets discount the diamonds. Those markets threaten to force another hike in interest rates to combat speculation against sterling.

The Minister will know what I mean when I say that the Secretary of State does not have a reputation as the most perceptive member of the Cabinet. That was confirmed today in front of the whole House. I want to say something about the contribution of the Secretary of State. I listened very carefully to try to catch the salient points, but I was able to take only two points from the speech. The first is that, clearly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby pointed out, the Secretary of State was confused about the difference between capital payments and current payments in the balance of payments. Secondly—I want to give him a little credit—he was right to say that the trend matters. What he did not own up to was the trend of the past 10 years. If he were to face up to that trend, he would recognise that we have a trading problem and that his Government have turned a trade surplus of £2 billion into a deficit which, it is predicted, will be £18 billion later this year.

But I want to be fair: I want to give the Secretary of State credit where credit is due. He has acknowledged that the trade deficit is a problem. During the debate on the address in reply to the Gracious Speech, he said:

"I know that the trade deficit is unacceptably high. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has taken steps to reduce it. However, the causes of the deficit lie not in the supply side failure but in the unacceptably strong surge in consumer demand and record imports of capital equipment for industry."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 121.]

Hon. Members will wonder which of the steps taken by the Chancellor the Secretary of State was referring to. Was he referring to the Chancellor's anti-inflation strategy? Did he believe that the Chancellor had endorsed the increases in electricity prices, water prices and rail fares? Did he believe that the Chancellor would be happy with the poll tax increases that have been imposed on even Conservative local authorities? Was he not alarmed by the increase in mortgage costs that the Chancellor inflicted on millions of people as he tried desperately to take steam out of an economy whose overheating had been fuelled by his predecessor in the 1988 Budget? Does not the Secretary of State accept that all those policies pushed up inflation, thus having the opposite effect to what was intended?

If the Secretary of State was somewhat ambiguous about the steps taken by his right hon. Friend, he cannot be accused of any ambiguity in regard to this second point. There is no doubt that the unacceptably strong surge in

consumer demand has caused a problem, and the country will want to ask some questions. Did not the previous Chancellor recognise that the 1988 tax handouts to the rich would cause problems? If he did not, did not the current Chancellor—who was Chief Secretary to the Treasury at the time, before going on his package holiday to the Foreign Office—recognise that a tragic spurt in the balance of payments deficit would be the inevitable result?

If neither of them understood the likely impact, why did not the then Secretary of State for the Environment—now Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—dash along Marsham street, round Parliament square and into Whitehall to warn the Treasury of their impending folly? Did he not perceive the economic damage that the 1988 Budget would cause, or was he too busy preparing the ground, drawing up proposals and probably consulting Conservative councillors—or perhaps not—about his highly successful plans for the poll tax, or his plans for water privatisation?

After his speech today, the House will probably not expect the Secretary of State to understand capital investment statistics, but I can tell him that it is not true that the importation of equipment for British industry took a significantly larger proportion of total imports. The shares in 1988 and 1989 were broadly similar to that of some 20 years ago. In 1986, the capital goods deficit was £0·8 billion out of £9·4 billion in total visible trade; by 1989, the deficit was £1·6 billion out of a total of £24·5 billion.

If capital goods were distorting the trade figures, the balance of payments would not be in its present mess. With a fall in manufacturing investment in the last quarter of 1989, January's figures would have displayed an improvement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the disastrous impact of the 1988 Budget several times. In fact, through tax cuts, the budget released taxes amounting to some £4 billion, while total credit expansion in that year was £40 billion. The problem is related not to fiscal policy but to the expansion of domestic demand, and high interest rates are the only way of bearing down on that.

Mr. Henderson: The main question to which the hon. Gentleman should address himself is whether the 1988 tax cuts had a beneficial effect on the economy, or can be shown to have caused more damage subsequently. The Government should have devised a balanced Budget that took account of the needs of investment, as well as those of increased consumption.

Do the Government now recognise what the country has increasingly come to recognise—that our economy is hopelessly out of balance and that even with all the benefits of £87 billion-worth of North sea oil revenues, our manufacturing sector is weaker than at any time in our history? Do the Government recognise that manufacturing output growth in the United Kingdom came 18th out of 20 OECD countries between 1979 and 1988 and that in the past three months our manufacturing output grew by only 0·2 per cent? Do they accept that manufacturing investment was only 2·5 per cent. of GDP in 1988, which I remind the House the Government claimed was a record year, compared with 3·3 per cent. in 1978?

If the Government recognise that there is a link between those figures and the state of our manufacturing sector, do they also acknowledge that the failures of our manufacturing sector lie at the core of our trade deficit? Writing in the *Sunday Times* last Sunday, David Smith described our trade performance as a "grim record", noting:

> "From 1979-1989, the volume of non-oil exports grew 43·9 per cent. while imports increased by 84·8 per cent."

If the Secretary of State needs further convincing, will he consider the view of the Confederation of British Industry about our supply-side failures? John Banham, the director general of the CBI, told the CBI conference last November:

> "We cannot expect to deal our way out of our problems. Investment in all its aspects—plant, skills, innovation and the infrastructure—remains the key".

He believes that such investment is necessary to tackle not only manufacturing efficiency and competitiveness, but the cause of the inflationary pressures in the economy. I agree.

Inflation is not a genie that has escaped from a bottle. Britain's inflationary gap with other countries is caused by a misguided macro-economic strategy. Today's inflation is caused by the Government's specific policy choices. They introduced the tax-cutting Budget for the rich that led to a glut of money chasing luxury imported goods. Those policy choices also rely on high interest rates and on an artificially shored-up exchange rate.

It is what economists used to call stagflation, but surely it is still stagflation. It is stagflation that will lead to cost pressures on our industrial competitiveness and have a further alarming impact on the trade deficit through its impact on export prices. That is not only my view. It was shared by David Smith in the *Sunday Times* last Sunday.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Is Labour's policy to reduce exchange rates, creating more inflation, to reduce interest rates, to increase taxes or to have import controls? What is Labour's alternative to the present policy?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman has shown that he is even more confused than some of his hon. Friends who spoke earlier.

The House has been asking for Labour's answers, so I shall give some answers. Like any sensible Government—like sensible Governments in Europe—a Labour Government would ensure that a proper balance was achieved in the economy and that proper choices were made between investment and consumption. A Labour Government would ensure that we invested in the important things, such as education, training and research and development, which the right hon. Member for Henley identified as key points.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: So you should be.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) listened to my speech with care, and I apologise for missing the first part of his speech. We want to know how the Labour party would effect the policies to which he referred. It is no good talking only about trading and balances. What will a Labour Government's fiscal policy be? What will they borrow? For what rates of taxation will they aim? What will be the exchange rate? Those are the things that we need to know. How will Labour achieve their policies?

Mr. Henderson: I am surprised that the hon. Member does not believe that training is important. After hearing his views on his local industrial development agency, I

[Mr. Henderson]

should have thought that he would believe that in his local economy training is absolutely important. He should have listened more closely to the speeches of Opposition Members, which have highlighted the important points in seeking to restore our economy.

We are now seeing the results of economic mismanagement. It is an economy in chaos and hopelessly out of balance, structurally and regionally. Together, those imbalances have caused further damage to the economy, which has meant that the Government have completely failed to tackle the long-standing problems of stop-go which has created a congested southern part of the country and areas in the north that are working far below their capacity.

It is not only a question of what the Government have failed to do. Clearly, they have failed to invest in training, education, research and development for the 1990s and in roads, railways, telecommunications and other important parts of our infrastructure. But it is also a question of what the Government have done. The Government know that they have taken £5 billion out of rate support grant to local authorities which could have been spent to regenerate our inner cities. They know that they have cut expenditure on export services. They know that they have hacked regional development aid. At a time when industry is crying out for support, they are breaking up and selling off the Department of Trade and Industry.

People are demanding a new agenda. The people of West Oxfordshire demand a new agenda and the people of Mid-Staffordshire will demand a new agenda. People want new ideas for a new decade. They demand an end to cynical consumer short-termism and an end to policies that give no thought to tomorrow. People are demanding an end to pay-offs for the rich. They want Britain to invest in its future. The British people want to be proud of British industry again. They want to be able to drive along our roads and travel on our trains without congestion. They want proper education and science for tomorrow's generation.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr Robert Atkins): And more roads.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, they want more roads, and more railways. They are looking forward to a better age. People want an end to greed, consumerism and the moral austerity that goes with looking after number one. People want the beginning of co-operation, concern and a moral commitment that goes with looking after the generation of tomorrow.

9.33 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): This has been in part an interesting debate, and also an important debate. It has been interesting because of the resolute refusal of Labour Front-Bench spokesmen, particularly the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to spell out the detail of Labour policy.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall not give way for the moment.

That was especially the case when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was challenged by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I shall identify one or two of the questions left unanswered by the hon. Gentleman.

It has been an important debate because it has been possible to put current economic concerns into their proper perspective. The Government accept that there are at least three economic issues that are of general concern and need to be addressed: the current inflation rate, high interest rates and the adverse trade gap.

It is wholly unseemly and quite inappropriate for the Labour party to criticise the Government about the inflation rate. Of course the present rate is too high, but even at its current level, it is only about one half of the average annual increase achieved by the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979. It is 19 percentage points below the record level of 26·9 per cent. that the Labour Government achieved in August 1975. Moreover, the policies that the Labour party and its trade union friends constantly urge upon us, most notably an immediate and substantial reduction in interest rates, a craven concession to any inflationary wage demand that may be made and a heedless hike in public spending, would widen the trade gap and lead to an early return to spiralling inflation.

I accept that interest rates are uncomfortably high, in that they put pressure on disposable income. However, I also accept that inflation puts yet more pressure on people's disposable income. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) so correctly said, the only effective way to reduce direct inflationary pressures is to bear down on consumer demand by and through interest rates, and that we shall continue to do for as long as may be necessary.

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall not give way at this point.

We shall not tolerate a return to the inflationary policies of the 1970s, fuelled and presided over by the Labour party, which confiscated savings, impoverished the elderly, destroyed both public and private investment and led us in shame to the IMF.

I am astonished that the Labour party is unable to recognise, or perhaps unwilling to concede, the improvements now taking place in the balance of trade. The transformation, especially in our exports, is quite extraordinary. In the three months to January 1990, there was a fall of £1·3 billion in the visible trade deficit. I turn specifically to exports, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), and here the figures are more encouraging. In the three months to January 1990 —excluding erratics and oil—the volume of exports was up 4 per cent. over the previous three months, and by no less than 11 per cent. on a year previously.

The import figures also point in an encouraging direction. In the three months to January 1990, the volume of imports was 1 per cent. lower than in the previous three months and only 2 per cent. higher than in the year previously. It is worth peering more closely at those crude figures. In the last three months, exports of manufactured goods rose by 3·5 per cent. Imports of manufactured goods fell by 1 per cent. Exports of passenger motor cars rose by 11 per cent. Imports of passenger motor cars fell by 3·5 per cent. Those figures, simple and readily comprehensible as

they are, point to the underlying strength and continuing competitiveness of British industry. That is the fundamental truth which has become apparent during the debate.

During the past 10 years, Britain has seen a fundamental transformation in her absolute and relative position. The facts are striking, so I shall give them. Manufacturing output in 1989 was 5 per cent. higher than in 1988 and 23 per cent. higher than five years ago. Manufacturing investment in 1989 was 5 per cent. higher than in 1988 and 34 per cent. higher than five years ago. In 1987 and 1988, economic growth was 4 per cent. higher in each year, on top of five successive years of previous growth. Manufacturing productivity has grown 25 per cent. in the past five years.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way in a minute.

Unemployment has fallen by 1·5 million in the past three and a half years. In the past 10 years, the real take-home pay of a married man on male average earnings with two children has gone up by one third.

Mr. Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: That is a transformation of a radical and rare kind.

I do not claim that the Government are entitled to exclusive credit for all that—that would not be right—but for the Labour party to disparage that record and to pretend that it is not so, or that if it is so that it is of no significance, is to commit a yet grosser failing; grosser because it shows either that they do not know the facts or that, knowing the facts, they do not care to admit them, or that they admit the facts but they do not understand them.

However one views it, Labour has been less than candid with the House and has had little or no significant material to contribute to the debate.

Now I come to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He did not deserve it, but I gave him the courtesy of listening to his speech. He said that he would say something about Labour policy. He did: it took him 30 seconds in a speech that lasted 32 minutes. There was a brief reference to more training, more research and development, lower interest rates and the exchange rate mechanism. He made only broad generalisations.

I entirely agree with the criticisms by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) of the speech made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He said that lower interest rates would stimulate demand, have a disastrous effect on inflation and widen the trade gap. I also agree with my right hon. Friend when he said of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that the talk about training and education is hot air, because, had the Labour Government done it way back in the 1970s, we would not be in the mess that we are in now. We are doing something about that, and they did not.

There may have been no policy from the hon. Gentleman but, goodness me, there was a great deal of ignorance. For example, he complained about a shortfall in research and development. The hon. Gentleman has not been doing his homework.

Mr. Ridley: He never does.

Mr. Hogg: Had he done it, he would have found some interesting facts. Between 1983 and 1987, industry invested more than 27 per cent. in real terms in research and development. The number of scientists and engineers employed in industrial research and development rose by 13 per cent. between 1981 and 1987. The Department of Education and Science's science budget is now 25 per cent. higher in real terms that it was 10 years ago. Total United Kingdom spending on research and development has grown by 4 per cent. a year in real terms since 1983. Those facts are clearly unknown to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, and that is a pity.

Ms. Armstrong: Would the Minister like to tell us why R and D investment by the Government in the last year for which we have figures was 2 per cent. for the northern region and about 60 per cent. for the southern region?

Mr. Hogg: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman—*[Laughter.]*—that the hon. Lady has raised that, because I shall now discuss the difference, if any, between the north and the south.

Another curious mistake made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was to refer to what he described as a gap opening up between the north and the south. He is clearly unaware of the latest unemployment figures, and he is clearly unaware that, in Wales, the north-west, Scotland and the north, unemployment fell faster in the past year than in London, the south-east and Greater London. Indeed, in the north and in Wales, it fell by almost 25 per cent. While we were having a little candour from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, why did he not tell us about the unemployment figures in his constituency? He did not, but I will. In the past 12 months, they have fallen by nearly 19 per cent.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East talked a great deal of nonsense about failure on the part of the regions to attract a high level of inward investment. What nonsense. Has he not heard of Toyota going to Derby and of Fujitsu going to Durham, and does he not know that, in Wales between 1984 and 1988, more than 250 overseas investment projects were created, resulting in some 31,000 new jobs?

The hon. Gentleman gave us stale jokes mixed with ignorance. In common with my hon. Friends, in particular my hon. Friends the Members for Esher (Mr. Taylor), and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), I have some questions that I would like to ask, because it is right that we should know what Labour party policy is.

Is it still Labour party policy to impose a payroll tax of half a per cent. on the pay bill? Is it still Labour party policy to hike national insurance subscriptions for employers? If the hon. Gentleman has forgotten where to find that, it is on page 33 of the policy review. Does the Labour party intend to oblige all employers to pay a minimum wage to some 4 million employees? If he does not know where to find that, it is on page 30 and 31 of the policy review.

Does the Labour party intend to have a national investment bank? Does it intend to have a network of regional banks? Does it intend to encourage pension trustees by changing the law to take account of the interests of regional economy? What are the answers to those questions? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Well, the House will draw its own conclusions. Either the Labour party has changed its policy in the past six months, or it is trying to conceal it. Either way it is disreputable.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley made an extremely powerful speech, in the course of which he called for distancing the Bank of England from Government

[Mr. Hogg]

policy. I am sure that he will agree when I say that that issue is essentially a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley will forgive my asking this question, at least rhetorically, of him: if the German central bank is indeed such a model of independence, how much independence did it have when the German Government decided to amalgamate the ostmark and the deutschmark? I suspect, not that much. There is, however, one matter on which I think that my right hon. Friend and I can agree: that all responsible bankers, whether or not they are independent, accept that interest rates are the only effective way to bear down on inflationary pressures. From that perspective, it is policy, not institutions, that matter.

My old sparring partner, the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), referred to training. He made a stirring call for more training, as did the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). We all agree about the merits of training. That is why we are putting policies in place. However, their speeches would have been a great deal better had they referred to the facts—for example, to the fact that industry is spending £18 billion on training, that the Government are setting up training and enterprise councils with budgets of £2·5 million, that we have introduced the core curriculum, that we have placed increased emphasis on science and engineering in higher education. We can all quarrel about policy adjustments, but to talk about training without mentioning these elements is, frankly, to admit ignorance on a grand scale.

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Gentleman has made great play of education and training, but does he not agree that Siemens in West Germany has trained more graduate electrical engineers than are are trained in the whole of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hogg: That particular fact is not in my head. However, the hon. Gentleman is in no position to talk about facts. During the five minutes of his speech that he spent on training, he failed to mention any one of the four facts that are central to the issue that I have just mentioned. He failed to mention the very encouraging downward trend in unemployment in his constituency, although he whinged about that. Unemployment in his constituency has fallen by about 18 per cent.

The hon. Member for Warrington, North also taxed me about Sunderland and referred to the end of shipbuilding there. However, shipbuilding is a cyclical industry. During the decade that led up to the decision in December 1988 to end shipbuilding in Sunderland, there was a dramatic downturn in the Sunderland work force. That downturn was associated with subsidies and loss. The Government have put in place a closure package that involves remedial measures to the value of £45 million. We are creating a diversified and more prosperous economy in Sunderland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) referred to the considerable improvement in industrial relations. He is wholly right. The facts deserve to be repeated. In 1989, working days lost were a third of the average during the period 1970 to 1979. The number of stoppages, at 672, was the lowest for about 50 years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West made an extremely powerful case in favour of Japanese manufacturers coming to the United Kingdom. In this, he was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield, with whom I entirely agree that cars produced in the United Kingdom, albeit by Japanese-owned companies, are European cars and ought to be treated as such. We should welcome that fact, because it is having a dramatic impact upon our indigenous capacity. At the moment, we have a United Kingdom car production capacity of about 1·3 million vehicles. By the mid-1990s, this will rise to about 2 million. That gives us an opportunity of unique proportions, not least for component manufacturers. I am sure the House will be pleased to know that, in 1989, car exports to Japan rose by no less than 75 per cent. in value.

When hon. Members talk about foreign penetration of our car market, it perhaps behoves them to remember that it was between 1974 and 1979 that import penetration doubled to 56·3 per cent., and it has remained stable since that time.

The hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) made two cardinal mistakes. He doubted the value of inward investment. I do not suppose that that feeling is shared by the employees of Nissan, Honda and Toyota or by the employees of Rheinhagen in or near his own constituency. Secondly, he did not mention the fall of 12 per cent. in unemployment in his constituency during the last 12 months. Moreover, he misunderstands the changes being undertaken by my right hon. Friend within the Department of Trade and Industry. The purpose of those changes is to make the delivery of services yet more effective.

So we come to the end of this debate, and I hope that hon. Members will read and reflect upon the terms of the motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I have to say to the House that, for ignorance or lack of candour, or a combination of both, it takes some beating.

The right hon. Gentleman refers to the present rate of inflation. True, it is too high, but it is a quarter of the level achieved by Labour in August 1975, and it is destined to fall. He refers to the trade deficit, but he ignores the fact that we have just had the best export figures for 17 years. The right hon. Gentleman speaks of business bankruptcies. Does he not understand that business is a dynamic process, with firms opening and firms closing? What matters is the net figure. In 1988, over 60,000 more firms opened than closed, which is a fourfold increase over 10 years previously.

The right hon. Gentleman refers to redundancies. He appears not to know that since 1983 employment has risen by 2·9 million and that our unemployment rate is now two thirds of the Community average. He speaks of investment cuts. Has he not been told that, in the three years to 1989, business investment increased by over 40 per cent., the largest increase in any three-year period since the war? He refers to cuts in regional investment, but appears not to know that, over the last few years, the regions have seen a dramatic upturn in their prosperity and employment levels and have received a dramatic proportion of that inward investment from Japan and America, which rightly regard Britain as the most attractive of the European countries in which to establish their manufacturing businesses.

The Opposition should be ashamed of the motion. It exudes ignorance, it is couched in half-truths, it reeks of humbug and we should reject it with contempt.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 285.

Division No. 105] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy

Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on policies which have achieved the highest rate of economic growth in the European Community, the largest increase in manufacturing productivity of any major industrial country, and record levels of industrial output, investment and exports; welcomes the continuous fall in unemployment for 42 months, and the creation since 1983 of nearly three million jobs in the United Kingdom; and commends the resolve of Her Majesty's Government to bear down on inflation and to continue with the supply side policies which have contributed to these achievements.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have heard reports that this evening in Bristol 21 people have been arrested and at least three policemen injured during demonstrations by the extremists of the Left wing of the labour movement and the Socialist Workers party. Would you be amenable, Mr. Speaker, to a private notice question or a Standing Order No. 20 application tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should ask that question in the Chamber, as he knows the rules for applications for private notice questions. I am not aware of what has happened in Bristol.

Prevention of Terrorism

10.15 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.

The House is being asked to continue in force the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, which was given Royal Assent less than one year ago. I have no hesitation today in asking the House to agree that all the powers that require renewal should continue in force for another year. I do so because of the continuing threat of terrorism to the lives and property of the people of this country. All right hon. and hon. Members can rest assured that the Government have no intention of weakening our resolve to meet that threat or of ceasing to provide the security forces with the powers that they need. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely a subject of this importance should be heard in silence.

Mr. Waddington: During 1989, the nation witnessed not only 62 further killings in Northern Ireland, including the murder of 23 members of the security forces, but the terrible incident at Deal in which 11 soldiers were brutally murdered, and the callous shooting of an RAF corporal and his baby daughter in West Germany. The Deal bombing caused the largest number of mainland deaths in a single Irish terrorist incident since 1974. In November, a car bomb in Colchester injured a soldier and his wife while another was placed in Kensington, but, by good fortune, did not explode. The bomb that exploded in Leicester last month could have caused many deaths and appalling injuries. There was also a bomb in Halifax.

No one can doubt that Irish republican terrorism continues to pose a deadly threat to the armed forces and to members of the public. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 forms an essential part of our defences against that threat. I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge once again the invaluable work and ceaseless vigilance of the security forces in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The last year was marked by some notable successes, including the arrest of two men on the Dyfed coast just before Christmas, and of the arrest of several Iranians in Manchester and London at about the same time. Those cases are now sub judice and the House will not expect me to comment further. However, I can say that the Dyfed arrests were the culmination of a seven-week police operation in the most atrocious conditions, and our thanks should go to all the officers involved.

In December, we had the anniversary of Lockerbie and were reminded of the wickedness of international terrorism. It is right that I should say a word about co-operation with other countries, which now so often plays a part in counter-terrorist investigations.

In 1989 there was successful collaboration with the police in the United States of America, France and West Germany. Suspected IRA terrorists, and others who, it is thought, were seeking to supply them with weapons, were arrested in each of these countries. Co-operation in investigations is supported by regular exchanges of information and ideas among Governments and their agencies, and the Trevi group is proving to be an increasingly useful forum.

The House will be grateful to Lord Colville for his fourth annual report on the legislation, and I am grateful to him personally. I am glad to say that he makes no criticism of the use of the executive powers of extended detention and exclusion, and is satisfied that any complaints made against the police for their use of the Act have been properly dealt with. This year, Lord Colville has carried out an investigation of the arrangements for implementing the Act at ports, and has found the standards of port controls acceptable.

I should mention three specific points that he raised in his report. First, Lord Colville says that some police forces seem uncertain about how their functions are to be exercised after 1992. I am pleased to have this opportunity to put the record straight. The Government remain committed to maintaining the system of police checks for counter-terrorist purposes which are operated under the powers in schedule 5 to the Act, and this is wholly in keeping with the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome.

Secondly, Lord Colville draws attention to the problem of preventing small boats being used by terrorists to bring people and supplies into the country. The difficulty is one of enforcement rather than any inadequacy of law. The police already enjoy sufficient powers under the Act to examine people entering the country, even by small boat, but we have to rely in the main on the vigilance and co-operation of boat owners and the general public for the powers to be brought into play.

Thirdly, it is, as Lord Colville observes, still too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the new provisions of the 1989 Act which provide powers to investigate, restrain and forfeit terrorist funds. The police have begun to use the new investigative powers, and since the Act came into force on 1 September, they have successfully applied for a total of 45 production orders. It is likely, however, to be some time before we can report that the full procedure has been used to obtain the forfeiture of terrorist funds.

There has understandably been interest in recent months in the safeguards available to suspects held under the prevention of terrorism legislation while they are subject to police investigation. There is a balance to be struck between the importance of having powers to increase public protection against terrorist outrages and the need to safeguard the rights of suspects. The legislation provides powers of detention and investigation which go beyond the ordinary criminal law and are necessary because of the nature of the terrorist threat, but this is not something which we accept lightly.

We believe that, wherever possible, the procedures for investigating terrorist suspects should follow those for suspects arrested under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—PACE. Indeed, those arrested under the 1989 Act are defined as being in police detention for the purpose of PACE. Lord Colville welcomes the recent extension of PACE procedures to Northern Ireland, and so do I. I also welcome the system of review of detention within the first 48 hours which is provided by schedule 3 to the 1989 Act, and it is helping to ensure that the reasons for detention are sound.

I am asking the House to renew the power to extend detention of terrorist suspects for up to a total of seven days because I believe that it is crucial to the operational

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effectiveness of the police in these difficult cases. Because I so believe, I confirmed last year our decision to make a limited derogation from the European convention on human rights in Northern Ireland cases. We took the decision reluctantly and after the most serious consideration, but it would have been quite wrong for us to shrink from making it.

I announced on 1 March that an experiment would begin in the Merseyside and Metropolitan police forces in taping summaries of interviews with terrorist suspects, together with suspects' comments on the summaries. These interviews are at present excluded from the provisions of PACE code (E) on tape recording. We have had to take account of the need to protect sources of intelligence and police operational methods, and that is why we have not introduced tape recording on the same basis as in other cases in which the whole interview is taped.

The experiment is planned to run for two years. It will be monitored by the Home Office research and planning unit, and evaluated by a steering committee on which the Law Society and the Criminal Bar Association, as well as the police and the Crown prosecution service, are represented.

Last year saw the 20th anniversary of the deployment of troops in Northern Ireland. The prevention of terrorism legislation has been in existence for 15 years. We are certain that, without it, the work of the security forces in countering terrorism would have been more difficult and less effective, and that the appalling toll of casualties would have been greater still. As time goes on, we are more —not less—resolved to defeat terrorism. Any signs that the determination of the citizens of the United Kingdom who believe in the rule of law is weakening will serve only to encourage those who respect neither law nor democratic government.

For many years, the Opposition recognised this and voted each year to renew the legislation that they had introduced. Then suddenly, in 1982, they changed their mind. Why? Not because terrorist killing had ceased; not because the threat to our armed forces and civilians was over. It was not the terrorists who had changed; it was the Labour party, and in so doing it lost any claim to be considered a responsible Opposition.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Waddington: Not just now.

Tonight the Opposition could change their mind again and show that they are made of something and are fit to govern. But I am pretty sure that they will not, and I shall certainly do my level best to keep the public aware that when it comes to the most fundamental issues—the country's defence against attack from without and from within—the Opposition cannot be trusted.

I commend the order to the House.

10.28 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary began by reminding the House—very properly, in my view—of the terrorist outrages that have been perpetrated during the year since we last debated this subject. He went on—again very properly, in my view—to reassert the Government's determination to defeat terrorism. In that resolve the Government are certainly supported by the Opposition.

There was, however, an omission from the speech of the Home Secretary. At no time did he relate the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act to the battle against terrorism. At no time did he tell us how the Act was helping in that campaign. He asserted it—he announced that it was his belief—but I think that he will come to realise, as the days and months go on, that the fact that it is his belief neither makes it necessarily true nor convinces the House that what he has to say is accurate. He made no attempt whatsoever to indicate a rational relationship between what the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act does and the defeat of terrorism.

Mr. Waddington: It was necessary to the fight against terrorism for the same powers to exist before 1982.

Mr. Hattersley: I shall come to that point. As the Home Secretary may well remember, when the powers passed into law they were called temporary powers—as they are now, but perhaps the title was rather more appropriate in 1972—and, as public statements confirm, they were intended to meet the immediate emotions and circumstances surrounding the Birmingham pub bombing. Hardly any Opposition Member who voted for them then—and I was one—contemplated for a second that 15 years later we should put the same legislation on to the statute book year after year. Whether or not the Home Secretary understands it, there is a substantial difference between emergency powers taken at a time of real crisis and emotion and their passage into permanent law.

The Home Secretary reminded us that this was our first opportunity to debate the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act since the Government announced their response to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights on the case of Terence Brogan. The court's judgment was that to detain suspects for up to seven days without charge and without judicial review was in breach of the European convention on human rights, but, notwithstanding that clear breach, the Government have chosen to go ahead with their policy.

It is no good the Home Secretary saying that there are safeguards for suspects because Ministers carry out reviews; the only safeguard for a suspect against arbitrary arrest is a review by some authority outside the Government who arrested him or her. If the Government are wrong in the first instance, they may be wrong in the second: that was the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

The fact that the Government have chosen to ignore or defy that judgment—let hon. Members describe the derogation as they will—is in itself cause for us to vote against the order. A second cause is the renewal of the powers that, in the words of a previous Attorney-General, amount to "internal exile"—the exclusion orders. Both grounds—detention without charge and without judicial review, and internal exile to parts of the United Kingdom —involve the principle of civil rights.

Let me emphasise, however, that we also have pragmatic arguments against the continuation of the order for a further year. The defeat of terrorism in Northern Ireland, to which I believe every hon. Member is committed, certainly requires strong action by the Government——

Mr. Sayeed: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman a specific question, so that the Labour party can establish its credentials as an anti-terrorist party? Is he aware of the existence of a Mr. Kuomba Balogun? Mr. Balogun lives in Bristol, and is the chairman of the Bristol, West Labour party. He has been convicted of causing grievous bodily harm, firebombing police stations and assaulting police officers. In September 1987, he was a guest of Gerry Adams in Belfast.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Mr. Balogun has just called on the IRA to assist the ANC in the same way in which Libya helped the IRA? Is it not essential for Labour to repudiate Mr. Balogun's actions, and to kick him out of the party?

Mr. Hattersley: First, I do not believe that we need to establish our credentials as an anti-terrorist party: our record speaks for itself. Secondly, I think that it is a misuse of the procedures of the House to ask me or any of my right hon. Friends a question about a gentleman of whom I have never heard in my life.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The right hon. Gentleman is the deputy leader of the Labour party.

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister of State, who is known for his gregariousness, reminds me that I am the deputy leader of the Labour party. Ours is a mass movement; I cannot know every member of the party, and the idea that I should be required to comment on facts launched at me in such a way and at such a time of night about an individual of whom I have not heard until this moment really is a misuse of our procedures. I am sure that it will get the hon. Gentleman's name into his local newspapers tomorrow, but it is not how a responsible Member of Parliament behaves——

Mr. John Patten: The right hon. Gentleman has said that, in his position as deputy leader of the Labour party, he cannot know what is going on in every part of the country. I agree that it must be difficult to know what is going on in every part of any political party, but I am sure that, in his normal assiduous way, the right hon. Gentleman reads the Order Paper on which there has been an early-day motion about Mr. Balogun for the past fortnight. The right hon. Gentleman should pay attention to what is going on.

Mr. Hattersley: The idea that I should spend my time reading early-day motions tabled by Conservative Back Benchers is simply preposterous. The Minister of State recognises pomposity when he sees it, and I am sure that he would be well advised—as would the House—to allow us to proceed to consider these enormously serious matters in a serious way——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Not for a moment. I do not believe that anybody can seriously argue that an appropriate way in which to discuss the order is that suggested by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed).

I return to my point which, despite the interruptions, I gladly reiterate—that the defeat of terrorism requires strong action by the Government and that we are prepared to and will support such strong action by the Government. However, the defeat of terrorism also requires the whole-hearted co-operation of the vast majority of law-abiding Irish men and women. To achieve that co-operation, the Government must convince them that the Government are themselves operating in and about Northern Ireland with proper respect for the law. They must convince the men and women of Northern Ireland——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Hattersley: They must convince the men and women of Northern Ireland that their Province is treated like any other part of the United Kingdom and that the normal processes of equality before the law apply in Northern Ireland just as in the rest of Great Britain.

I believe—and I think that many men and women who reside in the Six Counties also believe—that exclusion orders are inconsistent with the view that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom, because the exclusion orders, which the House is being asked to endorse, allow the Government to say that a man or a woman is not fit to live in Scotland, Wales or England, but can be required to live in Northern Ireland. Anyone who ever talks to the law-abiding majority in Northern Ireland knows the resentment that is built up by that sort of policy.

I re-emphasise that, as well as the issues of principle that the Home Secretary raised, such as the denial of civil rights, the objections to many of the powers of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act also relate to the arguments that they provide to those people who wish to argue that this Parliament will impose policies on Northern Ireland, that it would not contemplate on this side of the Irish sea—

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that circumstances are entirely different on this side of the Irish sea from those in Northern Ireland and that the dangers are much greater in Northern Ireland, which means that the provisions must therefore be slightly different?

Mr. Hattersley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will reconsider the point that I was attempting to make—that it is necessary to defeat terrorism by convincing the law-abiding majority in Northern Ireland that the Government here in Westminster operate according to the normal canons of the law. Measures such as this do not give that impression and do not create that confidence in the British legal system.

I believe that the Government understand that. I have heard the Home Secretary's predecessor say that one reason why the Government reject the idea of internment is that it would alienate many men and women in Northern Ireland who must be on the side of the forces of law and order. However, in a number of particulars—such as the exclusion orders and detention without charge—the Government are prepared to risk that alienation. They do it in such a way—as in the Home Secretary's speech—that it makes their policy a liability in the real political battle against terrorism—

Mr. Waddington *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: When the Home Secretary intervenes, I hope that he will not say that we do not have to win the

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political battle against the terrorists as well as the legal battle. I subscribe to the view expressed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he talked about the need to win the political arguments as well as the military arguments. Those two things must be borne in mind tonight.

Mr. Waddington I have listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman's arguments, but he has not began to explain why they are valid now but apparently were not valid until 1982. What has changed which makes the right hon. Gentleman say that certain arguments are now valid which were rubbish before 1982?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give the Home Secretary the answer that I gave him when he asked the question 10 minutes ago. If he asks me again, I shall give him the same answer the next time. These emergency powers, which are called temporary and were intended as temporary, were, as *Hansard* shows, meant to meet the special emotions as well as the circumstances of thé Birmingham pub bombing. I well remember the then Home Secretary saying that it was necessary to demonstrate at that moment the strength of our feeling. He said that it was necessary to do so to protect the Irish community in Britain. The circumstances of the year of the Birmingham pub bombing no longer exist. That is the difference.

Before I develop—if the Home Secretary will allow me—our arguments against the two major powers, detention without charge and the exclusion orders, I make it clear that we welcome and support parts of the Act and parts of the renewal of the Act. We support part III, which provides for the confiscation of terrorist funds. We made that clear when the Act was passed, and we support it again tonight.

I also welcome the Home Secretary's statement last week about the central provision of the Act—internment without charge. Last week the Home Secretary announced that what he described as "suspected terrorists"—I presume that by that he meant people detained under the Act—would in future have limited tape recording of their interviews in police stations. They would be limited in scope and in the area where the experiment was held. That provision is very much to be welcomed.

In previous debates, we have called for the protections provided under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to be extended to men and women detained under the PTA. When we did so two years ago, we were told that that was an example of how we were soft on terrorism. The Home Secretary has moved a step in our direction and I welcome that. I hope that we shall continue to examine more ways in which men and women detained under the Act can have the proper protection that a civilised country provides.

I am particularly glad that the tape recording, although limited, will end the intolerable practice that Sir Leon Brittan, then Home Secretary, described to the House. I asked him:

"Is he saying that it is right . . . to detain innocent people without charge for the purpose of obtaining information"

He replied:

"It has been made clear . . . that that is a legitimate . . . use of the power."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 56.]

Both on the Government Front Bench and on Opposition Benches, there is now wide agreement that it is intolerable to detain innocent men and women without charge as part of an intelligence-gathering operation. The tape recording of interviews, although limited, will not make that practice impossible, but it will certainly make it more difficult.

It is enormously important to remember when we discuss the principle of detention—which means detention without charge for as long as seven days—that we are talking about the detention of innocent men and women. In their statement to the European Court of Human Rights, the Government said that it would be impossible to reveal the evidence on which charges are made without prejudicing security by revealing the sources from which the evidence emanated. In most cases of detention under the PTA, there is no information leading to a charge. In most cases of detention, no charge is ever made. Last year, 163 men and women were detained under the powers that the Government now wish to renew. Only 19 were even prosecuted. Of the 19, eight were prosecuted for offences that were not involved with Northern Ireland terrorism.

The Home Secretary said that, in his annual review of the workings of the Act, Lord Colville had found no criticism to make of the executive action in applying the Act. That is true but it is a little disingenous of the Home Secretary to put it in those terms, for last year, when considering the principles on which the Act was based—not the way in which the principles have been applied since the Act became law—Lord Colville referred to

"the worrying indications in the level of charges brought as a proportion of detentions made under the Act."

What Lord Colville said about detentions and prosecutions was that men and women detained outnumber intolerably the number of men and women who are actually charged and against whom a case is made.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The right hon. Gentleman has based his case on principle. Will he say on what principle he assesses the European Court of Human Rights' implied judgment that four days' detention before charge is all right, but seven days is wrong in principle?

Mr. Hattersley: Four days happens to be three days shorter than seven days. We all accept that detention occurs under normal criminal procedure. We all accept that there may be a brief period before the charge is made. What is intolerable is when that period is prolonged. I could ask the Attorney-General exactly the same question: what is the difference between two days and seven days? At the end of two days, the powers have to be renewed. The implication of the provision, which provides for two days to be renewed to seven, is that the longer the period, the greater the offence.

The Attorney-General *rose*—

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman can try again if he wants, with the greatest of pleasure.

The Attorney-General: With great respect, the right hon. Gentleman may have forgotten that, under PACE, the time limit is 96 hours, subject to the safeguards of the approval of Her Majesty's court, obtained first at 56 hours and then at the ultimate period. The safeguards are slightly different in detention in Northern Ireland, but they are stringent and require the personal approval of the Secretary of State. I am not sure where the point of principle lies.

Mr. Hattersley: I repeat that the point of principle is that, the longer a man or woman is detained without charge, the worse the offence. The longer a man or woman is detained without judicial review, the greater the offence. We all accepted, in PACE, that an initial period may be necessary. It is the extension of that period which is wrong in principle.

I hope that the Attorney-General will struggle to remember that he is not simply a member of the Government but a Law Officer. It is unacceptable to say that there are safeguards when the Minister who approves the detention in the first place also approves an extension of that detention. The safeguard must be an independent authority, not the Minister who took the original decision.

One of the differences between detention under this Act and normal procedures of arrest and charge, is the discrepancy, to which I referred, between the number of people detained and the number who get into court and have a charge made against them. Of the 163 cases of men and women detained without charge last year, in 144 cases there was not even sufficient evidence to bring a case into court. I suspect that that disturbs the Attorney-General. If it does not, he does not hold the views on the judical system that I have suspected him to hold for a long time.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Does not the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the differential between those taken into custody for questioning and those charged has more to do with the inadequacies of the law in dealing with terrorism? Does not he acknowledge that such things as intimidation and the reluctance of witnesses to come forward to give evidence have much to do with the differential that he mentioned? I can illustrate that by reminding him that, of 183 murders in my constituency by the IRA only 15—less than 8 per cent.—have been resolved through the courts. Is the right hon. Gentleman trying to tell me that the other 169 murders did not really take place or that no one was responsible for them?

Mr. Hattersley: During a series of debates on this subject, I have always been reluctant to take issue with the hon. Gentleman, because I know of the suffering in his constituency and I understand the strength of his feeling about it. I do not regard it as a giggling matter but as a matter of great seriousness, and I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that those are my feelings.

But the point that the hon. Gentleman made, with force and with feeling, is dangerously near to the position that I was about to offer some criticism of—the feeling that we cannot convict such people within the rule of law but we know they are guilty so we must do something about them. It is enormously dangerous in a free society to talk or think in that way.

I understand the penalties of there being men and women who we have strong reason to believe are guilty but whom we cannot convict through the normal processes. But during the past 20 years, so many crimes have been committed in the judicial system by people who knew somebody was guilty, but could not provide the appropriate evidence at the time, that that is a principle which we must avoid at all costs. One of my complaints about the Act is that it works on the principle: there are men and women whom we cannot convict under the normal process of law, so let us invent abnormal processes of law to make sure that they are convicted.

Let me deal briefly with what I regard as the second denial of justice involved in the Act—the continuation of exclusion orders. The Home Secretary—he will forgive me a second time for calling him disingenuous—told us that Lord Colville has no objection to the way in which exclusion orders are being administered. The Home Secretary will recall that, in his basic report last year, Lord Colville objected to the existence of exclusion orders, so he is a rather strange witness to call in defence of what the Home Secretary has done during the past year. Both Lord Colville and Sir Cyril Philips, who were asked to examine the principles of the Act, came down against exclusion orders. Will the Minister of State, who I believe is to reply, give us a cogent explanation of why exclusion orders, with all the offence that they cause to Northern Ireland, are still necessary?

Only nine exclusion orders were made last year, but that did little or nothing to reduce resentment, because every traveller from Ireland to England is required to answer questions on the basis that they may be subject to exclusion orders. I know from experience that anyone who has been subjected to that experience finds it difficult to believe that Irishmen are treated in Britain in the same way as citizens in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Opinions against exclusion orders are so strong and the use of them is so rare that I ask again why the Government persist in causing deep offence by maintaining the power. The answer, I fear, is the same as the answer to the general question about the Government's support for the Act. The Act is intended to create the illusion of tough action. It is exemplary and declaratory rather than necessary. It is intended to allow the Home Secretary and people of his ilk to make the sort of perorations that he made this evening, with all their lack of justification, logic or intellectual content.

If the Home Secretary contests that point, I hope that he will answer a single question about the need for the powers, based on the way in which the powers are used. Two years ago in my constituency, an elderly consultant psychologist was detained under the powers of the Act. She was eventually charged with an offence concerning explosives and was acquitted. Why was it necessary, when it was suspected that explosives, or those who might use them, were being hidden or harboured in the suburbs of an English town, to arrest under the powers of the Act rather than under the normal powers of the criminal law?

When I asked the previous Home Secretary exactly that question, he answered with an example of his own—a policeman who had been shot in cold blood in his constituency. Tragically, several policemen are murdered every year in Britain and the criminals responsible are pursued with proper determination and they are usually caught and convicted. We do not need the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act to do it. The Act is now often used for purposes that could be wholly met by the common and criminal law.

The only possible justification for continuing with the Act is the declaratory purpose that I have described, or something that I regard as much more sinister. It was the revelation of a Home Office Minister, not the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who defended the special powers by saying:

"under PACE the powers of arrest can be exercised only where a constable has reasonable grounds to suspect that a particular offence has been committed or is about to be committed."

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He could not then have gone on to be clearer about his view of why the Act is necessary. He said that it made possible the arrest of a suspect

"where one cannot prove, or does not have reasonable grounds to suspect, the commission of a specific . . . offence." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee B* 10 January 1989; c. 295.]

In a democracy, men and women are not detained for seven days without charge when the police cannot demonstrate reasonable grounds for suspicion that they have committed or are about to commit a specific offence. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act is intended to provide that unacceptable power. For that reason, it is unacceptable, and I shall vote against the order.

10.55 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about what happened in 1974 and 1976, when the Acts were passed. Nobody thought that we would be debating them again in 1990, and it is regrettable that we have to do that. He also made the point that it is not possible to prove that the Prevention of Terrorism Act deals with the problem of terrorism. That is true, but it is also not possible to prove the contrary.

Common sense dictates that the Act restrains terrorists and potential terrorists. It may or not be true, but it is my view that it does. I would not wish to be in the House in a year's time—when, or if, the number of murders or terrorist activities had doubled—and have to say that I was terribly sorry but I was wrong, and the Act should be reintroduced. I would not wish to have to face the families and the relatives of those people who had been killed.

This is a matter for caution, as was said in 1974 and 1976. Caution should also be expressed now, because the position has not got much better. I am sure that, if the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook examines his conscience, he may decide that that is not an unreasonable view. I hope that there will come a time when the Act is not necessary, but the only way it will become unecessary is if people in Ireland and in mainland Britain believe that terrorism has no result.

I ask hon. Members to consider the speech made by the Leader of the official Opposition—Fine Gael—in the Dail, advising the Taoiseach to say that there was no purpose in pursuing the ideal of a united Ireland. That is the most positive and sensible statement that a Republican politician has made in recent years, and I trust that the Taoiseach will take advantage of that advice.

I do not believe in negative Unionism—the wish that Northern Ireland should not be part of the Republic. I believe in positive Unionism—that the people of Northern Ireland wish to be citizens of the United Kingdom—and that is a very different thing. I use every possible opportunity and any available forum to advance that view, but it is not much good for an English Conservative and Unionist to advance that view almost by himself. It is important that those who represent the Unionists should use every forum available to them to advance that view, whether it be in the House or in the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier. I know of the difficulties that my right hon. and hon. Friends have in that direction. Difficulties exist, but they should be overcome.

That tier was to some extent a success last week, but it had one weakness—the Unionist representatives were not present to advance the view which I tried to represent in my own poor way.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): We are discussing the renewal of the Act. The hon. Gentleman made a fundamental point: that if the Act were repealed and the killing increased, we should have to legislate again. Does he attribute the reduction in the number of killings to the Act, and is he saying that, if it had to be reintroduced it would stop the killing?

Mr. Porter: I cannot have made myself clear. I said that it cannot be proved either way, but that I should not want to have to prove it one way or the other by having an increase in murders and acts of terrorism.

The only way in which the Unionist cause can be advanced is in any forum that is available. It would be regrettable if the Unionist politicians in the House—again I repeat the phrase: those whom I treat as my right hon. and hon. Friends—did not take the opportunity to advance the cause that I hold dear, and that I know they hold dear, for domestic political reasons. There is a forum. There is a reason for Unionist Members of Parliament to overcome their local difficulties and to stand up and speak *to that in which they* believe. Only then will the cause of positive Unionism lead to the defeat of terrorism. Only then will the Act be unnecessary.

11 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary began the debate with a straightforward account of the events of the past year. From what he said, it is plain that the threat of terrorism has in no way diminished since we previously debated these matters. The bombing at Deal and the other car bombs on the mainland of Great Britain show that we are faced with a present threat, close to home. The outrages that have affected our troops in Germany show that they are at the forefront of the battle.

However, it is right to consider the legislation on its merits and with due regard to its effectiveness in dealing with the threat. It will not do simply to treat the legislation that we seek to renew tonight simply as a totem, as a test of whether one is opposed to terrorism. I thought that the Home Secretary's remarks at the end of his speech, in which he attacked the Labour party, came perilously close to suggesting that it was such a totem. There was some deficiency in the way in which he deployed the case for the continuance of these extensive powers. The deficiency was in his argument as to the effectiveness of these powers to combat terrorism.

Throughout the operation of these powers, my right hon. and hon. Friends have supported their renewal with consistency and in the belief that they play a significant part in dealing with the terrorist threat. We listen to the debate and participate in it with a strong sense that fundamental rights and freedoms are important. If we are to abridge them in the serious manner that is provided for, particularly with respect to the power of detention for up to seven days and the exclusion powers that provide for internal exile, we have to be satisfied that they are effective.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) failed to address the attitude of those who are responsible for policing and the attitude of Lord Colville, who was charged with the review of these powers and their effectiveness. It is quite clear that, according to the evidence in Lord Colville's report, the powers are effective and need to be renewed. He went so far as to say that he considered that they would probably have to be in place for some time to come.

Who are we, who are not privy to the difficulties of policing, to say that these powers are not effective? The mere fact that prosecutions do not inevitably follow from detention is no evidence that deterrence has not been at play. Who are we to say that the exclusion powers, which are so draconian and unwelcome, do not result in those who are organised for terrorism remaining within the Province, where their movements can be tracked and

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

where the policing of them is much more straightforward than it could be if they were moving freely round the British Isles?

No one likes these powers. The question that the right hon. Gentleman must address is whether they are effective, and he did not even touch on that.

Lord Colville, in the context of detentions, drew some attention to what he thought was striking. He spoke in paragraph 4·3 of the power to detain beyond the first 48 hours and pointed out:

"All but nine extensions were for two days, one was two days and 10 hours, four for three days, two for two days plus one day and two for three days plus two days. I have seen nothing about these cases which requires comment, except for one case in Tayside."

This case concerned six men who were held for a period under the Act and beyond the normal Scottish six-hour limit. Lord Colville went on to say:

"At a trial in the High Court in Perth all six were convicted and sentenced to between seven and 16 years in prison."

That seems to be a pretty remarkable testimony to the effectiveness of these powers, and the fact that Lord Colville thought it appropriate to draw attention to that case shows that he thought it was of significance. Since we are not privy to the policing, the interrogations or the evidence in the cases that come before us, the evidence of Lord Colville as to the effectiveness of what is being done under this Act is bound to carry immense weight with the House.

Since we last debated this, the Brogan case denouement has occurred. The Government have derogated effectively and for the time being on the ground that it is not possible to meet the requirements of a judicial interposition within the seven days. I am bound to say that I deeply regret that, and am not wholly convinced that it would not be possible to meet the requirements of the European convention. I understand that the inquisitorial procedures of continental jurisdictions are very different, although there are some analogues in the Scottish system which, however, would not be regarded as acceptable within this legislation to bring it within the European convention. But I wonder whether it is possible for this matter at least to be reviewed during next year, for I cannot understand, and do not believe any good reason has been given for, the failure to meet this requirement of the European convention.

It must, however, be said that this derogation is not unique in the history of our emergency powers. The Labour Government derogated in 1978, at that time without the opposition of the House, and I do not think they had any other choice. There is not a particularly strong case for criticising the derogation on this matter.

The exclusion orders are undoubtedly the part of the legislation that give rise to the greatest anxiety and justifiable concern that they should be properly scrutinised and not used lightly. The evidence produced by Lord Colville on the process of appeal to the advisers of the Home Secretary, which was relied on successfully in a number of cases leading to the termination of exclusion, shows that that process of review is by no means a fig leaf. It is an effective control over the abuse of those powers.

I do not know whether the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has availed himself of the opportunity to discuss with the police the use of exclusion powers or the practical difficulties for policing in Great Britain which would flow from the abandonment of those powers, but my discussions with the police leave me wholly persuaded that they are a practical necessity.

I do not believe that the threat to this country from terrorism has diminished since we last debated these provisions. The arguments that led us to support the powers in the past remain strong, but the argument for continuing an effective scrutiny and appeal procedure is also strong. We must regard the provisions as temporary powers to be renewed only following the most comprehensive and detailed review by Lord Colville or some other Government appointee and by Parliament. It is wholly correct that the Home Secretary should come to the House to seek such draconian powers and to seek the support of Parliament for their use again. He will enjoy that support from my right hon. and hon. Friends.

11.11 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, there is a need to strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the need to protect innocent members of the public and the lives of our security forces.

When I visited Northern Ireland two years ago, I was struck by the fact that the UDR regiment which I visited —a unit of only 400 or 500 men—had lost 28 men, nearly all of them killed while off duty, since the troubles began. The House is not divided on intention. With only one or two exceptions, all right hon. and hon. Members want terrorism to be defeated. The division in the House concerns the willingness to do something about it.

The IRA does not believe that its members are common criminals. It uses the language of war, talking about "active service units", "staff officers" and "adjutants". Its members use the phraseology of war. I do not know a single example anywhere in the world of an organisation of the size and strength of the IRA that is organised and equipped to the same extent as the IRA having been defeated within the confines of the ordinary criminal law. But that seems to be what the Labour party is suggesting as the way to tackle the present problem. I do not know an example of such a threat even having been contained, let alone defeated, within the confines of the ordinary criminal law.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) repeatedly mentioned the principle of equality—the idea that we should treat people in Northern Ireland in exactly the same way as those on the mainland. I am sure that, in our hearts, we would all like to adhere to that principle, but surely, whichever of the provisions we are considering, the right that people in Northern Ireland must want most—I am glad that several right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies are here—is the right to stay alive and live their lives in an ordinary fashion.

Mr. Hattersley: How does the hon. Gentleman think that that right would be preserved by exclusion orders which send terrorists back from Britain to live among the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brazier: The right hon. Gentleman said that such orders had been rarely used. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] To the extent that they have been used—*[Interruption.]* Do Opposition Members really want to hear my answer? The order gives the Secretary of State power in rare cases

—such provisions have been used only rarely—to interfere with the movement of specific terrorists in the course of specific operations. On those rare occasions when they have been used, they have no doubt been used to good effect to prevent certain operations.

But the basic purpose of all these provisions is to try to contain and defeat terrorism. If they are not fully effective, it may be necessary to consider strengthening them. When, last year, we took steps to strengthen them, Labour Members did not support us. Those on the Opposition Front Bench decided to abstain, but 50 Labour Members voted against our proposal.

It has become too much of a charade that, year after year, since the Labour party changed its colours in 1982, it has been taken for granted that the Labour party would be against the renewal of these provisions. It is wrong that we should take that for granted. The country should appreciate that, while Labour Members say fine things about intentions, they are firmly against any action on terrorism.

I commend the order and urge the House to support it.

11.16 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I congratulate the Home Secretary on introducing the measure and in particular on introducing—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Only one hon. Member at a time may address the House.

Mr. Allason: I also congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on introducing an aspect of PACE—the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1983—into the prevention of terrorism legislation. The idea of recording —and, I hope, eventually video recording—will be of great assistance, not just in obtaining convictions but in protecting the rights of police officers who conduct investigations, particularly during interrogations at police stations. An advantage of PACE tape recordings is that we have been able to get away from suspects' claims of having been "verballed". I hope that it will be successful if it is extended to counter-terrorism measures.

I offer a word of caution to my right hon. and learned Friend. The key to beating the Provisionals or any other terrorist group is good intelligence. There have been several examples of poor intelligence. He mentioned in his summary of recent cases the suspects arrested at Dyfed. It would appear to many observers that that occurred not as a consequence of good intelligence work but because of the cock-up theory, as opposed to the conspiracy theory, of history. It was an example of people being vigilant and reporting the information to the police, with a surveillance operation then being mounted. In other words, it did not originate from good intelligence.

Similarly, more than a year ago, two photographs taken by Provisionals of themselves for false identity documents were found in a flat in south London. Those photographs were widely distributed, yet it seems that one of the suspects was on the loose in Nottinghamshire and the north of England. That, too, was an example of poor intelligence.

I urge the Home Secretary to consider undertaking a serious review of the performance, structure and role of the Security Service. I hope that a consequence of the changes that have taken place in eastern Europe will have been a change in the Security Service's targeting of eastern European embassies. If we can move some of the counter-intelligence surveillance experts who keep suspect intelligence officers from the eastern bloc under surveillance to counter-terrorist duties, it will be extremely useful.

I have one small plea. In the post-Lockerbie era, it is clear that not only intelligence, but co-operation between intelligence services of different countries, is vital in the fright against terrorism. I regard it as a disappointment that the European security group, which meets regularly in Brussels and elsewhere to discuss common security problems, includes Canada and Israel, but excludes the United States. I hope that its membership will be reconsidered as soon as possible. I commend the motion to the House.

11.20 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I oppose the order. I draw to the attention of the House the fact that the first person in this country to be arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was Paul Hill, a constituent of mine, who was arrested after the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings. It later transpired not only that he was not in Guildford or Woolwich and, therefore, did not plant any of the bombs—he was not guilty and could not have been—but that the other three who were imprisoned as a result of confessions that were extracted from them under the Prevention of Terrorism Act could not have been guilty. They served 15 years in prison and an enormous campaign was mounted for their release. They were released because of that campaign, the widespread national and international support that they received and the admission that was finally made by the Director of Public Prosecutions that he had no further evidence to offer against them. Lord Lane acquitted them and the Home Secretary appeared at the Dispatch Box to make a statement on the acquittal.

I remind the House that at the time that Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Paddy Armstrong and Carole Richardson were arrested and convicted, many hon. Members called for the restoration of the death penalty. Had the death penalty been restored, we should have been talking about a royal pardon for four people who had been wrongly executed.

I also remind the House that the use of confessional evidence, which is the basis of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, has led to the imprisonment of the Birmingham Six, who have now served almost 16 years in British prisons. I have visited them in prison several times. It is a humbling experience to go to a prison and to talk to people about all the things that we have done in the past 16 years of our lives when the only experience that those six men have had is being inside a series of British prisons—and being badly treated in them initially.

I am convinced that no one in the Home Office or in the Government believes that the Birmingham Six are guilty. We know that there is new evidence which the Home Secretary is considering. I hope that the Home Secretary will give us an idea tonight of when he will be able to reply to the new evidence that has been submitted on behalf of the Birmingham Six.

The House will commit a serious act if it passes this legislation. We shall be saying that it is all right to imprison people on the basis of confessional evidence, to hold people without recourse to legal assistance, to have

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the principle of internal banishment within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to fly in the face of a great deal of legal and judicial opinion and to set ourselves apart from what we consider to be civilised legislation anywhere else in the world.

My experience of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act is that it has nothing to do with the prevention of terrorism and everything to do with policing and patrolling the Irish community in this country. I have lost count of the number of occasions that I have had telephone calls late at night from Irish people who live in my constituency, who were expecting a son, a daughter, an uncle, an aunt or a father to come across to visit them from Dublin or from Belfast, but who find that they have not arrived. They ask me, "Do you know where they are?" I have no idea where they are. We then start an amazing series of telephone calls to find out whether someone is being held under the Act. A Kafka-like mystery surrounds it and it is not clear whether that person is being held until lawyers make contact and eventually application is made for a writ of habeas corpus.

If we are serious about a judicial legal system and about a system of real justice, we should not agree to the order. It flies in the face of everything that we understand about justice. Too many people are in British prisons because of confessional evidence and because of the Act. Many people have been stopped, searched, held, interrogated and subsequently released without any charge, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said. The Act gives the power to investigate, to hold without due process and to collect a great deal of evidence about the activities of the Irish community in England, Wales and Scotland and the views of those who may believe that Ireland should be united and not part of the United Kingdom. It is perfectly legitimate to hold such an opinion.

I hope that the order will not be passed, although I suspect that the payroll vote will ensure that it is. Instead, we should concentrate on the serious miscarriages of justice. I have mentioned the Guildford Four, who, thankfully, are now free. I also mentioned the Birmingham Six, who I hope will soon be free. There are many other people in British prisons because of the collection of confessional evidence, which is enshrined in the Act, such as those imprisoned after the Broadwater farm riots. Again, confessional evidence was used there. It is a serious step to enshrine that permanently in legislation and I hope that the House will not agree to that.

11.26 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who is the only Labour Back-Bench Member to get up and debate the issue, which I think is one of great importance. As I have told him before, I am aware of how seriously he takes these issues and I respect the way in which he deals with them—even though, as he knows, there is quite a gulf between our attitudes.

The hon. Gentleman made something of the position of the Birmingham Six. It is not for me to say whether he was in order to do so. The Birmingham Six were not arrested under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. However, I can tell him that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I are studying with great care papers put to the Home Office about that matter. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an announcement as soon as he is in a position to do so.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) for his welcome for the order and for the congratulations that he extended to my right hon. and learned Friend. In many ways, however, the scene was set in the first speech by a Conservative Back Bencher, when my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) clearly and precisely drove home the fact that we are talking about a preventive power. We are trying to prevent things from happening. It is all too easy to lose sight of the preventive element in the Act—a theme that I intend to develop.

It is often suggested that the exceptional powers provided by the Act are unnecessary because the ordinary criminal law should be adequate to deal with offences committed by terrorists. As I understand the Labour party's emerging new policy, its stance is that the ordinary criminal law is adequate to deal with terrorist offences. I do not think that it is. The Labour party's stance is not realistic. I agree with everyone, including the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), that terrorists are common criminals. We are firm in our belief that, once they are brought to justice, there should be no special treatment for common criminals and no special status for self-styled terrorists or freedom fighters —a point rightly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier).

I am sure that the substantial number of Unionist Members here this evening, who have first-hand experience of these matters—which I shared with them for two and a half years—agree that terrorist organisations present a special problem for the security forces, requiring a response which, alas, goes beyond the powers available in the normal criminal investigation of alleged offences or the prevention of outbreaks of criminal activity. In the case of terrorist organisations such as the IRA, their systematic ruthlessness, destructiveness and organisation are far in excess of those of organised crime anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

Irish Republican terrorists have staged a campaign in the United Kingdom over the past 20 years which is unparalleled elsewhere in western Europe. No other country in western Europe has put up with the things that we and those in the Province have had to endure over the past two decades. I do not accept that the persistence of the terrorist threat is a sign of the failure of the prevention of terrorism legislation. Without it, there would be still more victims and still more destruction, and fewer of those responsible would be brought to court. On that point, I think that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—I was about to call him my hon. Friend—and I are in complete agreement.

In our resistance to terrorism, we are rightly bound by the rule of law. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook alluded to that, but it was only subjected to close examination by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) in his thoughtful and thought-provoking speech. We are bound by the rule of law and the principle of democratic accountability, to which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland referred. But terrorists could not give anything for democratic accountability or the rule of law. I guess that

the Opposition have begun to forget that in their opposition to the prevention of terrorism legislation since 1982.

Terrorists have a disregard for the lives of others and for the democratically expressed wishes of the people in both communities in Northern Ireland and on this side of the water. It is a positive tragedy that we cannot rebuild bipartisan agreements between both sides of the House to attempt to defeat terrorism. There is obviously everything to be said for the official Opposition, ourselves and every party in the House seeking to rebuild the consensus which I guess exists tonight between the Conservative party and the Liberal Democratic party, and in many senses between us and the Ulster Unionists, my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) and others.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Does my hon. Friend agree that a number of Members of the Labour party—men of honour—could not see their way to opposing the measure and will be conspicuous by their absence from the Division Lobbies?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend draws our attention to the importance of reading the Division lists tomorrow to see which hon. Members were not here to vote against the order.

I was asked specific questions by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. He said that the Act did not seem to prevent anything and he wanted hard evidence of successes. Sometimes, as in all crime prevention, it is hard to judge when legislation has prevented something from happening. That is common ground on both sides of the Chamber.

Let me give a recent example which was close to home in the Chamber. I hope that hon. Members on the Labour Front Bench are listening. Three people arrested in Wiltshire were held for seven days under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Those three people were later convicted of conspiracy to murder my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence when he was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. They were sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment.

Is that not good enough for everyone on both sides of the House as an indication of the need for the Prevention of Terrorism Act? I dread to think what would have happened on that occasion had we not had the provisions of that Act.

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister of State may recall that the previous Home Secretary gave this example when we were debating these matters in a slightly calmer vein a year ago. Let me repeat a question that I put earlier tonight—not the one that he has not yet begun to answer. I shall put it to him in exactly the terms of his example. Last year the former Home Secretary told us that three men had been found in the grounds of the house belonging to the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The three men were carrying offensive weapons and had no legitimate reason to be in those grounds. Is the Minister of State really asking what would have happened had the Prevention of Terrorism Act not existed? We know what would have happened. The three men would have been arrested, just as three men carrying firearms in any other grounds would have been arrested. The Prevention of Terrorism Act was not needed for that.

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Gentleman has just given an excellent example [HON. MEMBERS. "Answer."] I am trying to do so.

I have just been advised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General that an appeal is outstanding and that, therefore, the case is sub judice—*[Interruption.]* No. That is a reference to the situation in the past. I am advised by my right hon. and learned Friend that I cannot go further, any more than I could, in detail—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Attorney-General, through the Minster of State, has just informed us that an appeal on this matter is outstanding. Obviously, then, it is not in order for Ministers to speculate. As the case is sub judice, should not the Minister withdraw——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The sub judice rule does not apply to legislation, and this is delegated legislation.

Mr. Patten: There are also other cases, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary referred in his opening speech—such as the Dyfed case and the Iranian arrests.

Mr. Barry Porter: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: I have very little time, but I shall give way.

Mr. Porter: If people had been convicted for carrying offensive weapons they would not, without the Prevention of Terrorism Act, have been given 25 years, even if I had been the judge.

Mr. Patten: I had better be guided by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and refrain from discussing examples that might be seen as too close to home.

Let me return to the second point of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. The fact that the police do not bring a charge does not invalidate the grounds on which a detention was made. The information may be too sensitive to bring before the court. This point was referred to by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland. The powers are preventive, and they may frustrate terrorism.

Let us consider the cases that have arisen since the Brogan judgment—the incidents that we have had in Great Britain which, alas, have escaped the attentions of the ordinary forces of law and order, and have escaped the attentions of provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. I refer to incidents such as the bomb at Turnhill barracks on 20 February 1989; the bomb at the Royal Marines school of music on 22 February; and the car bomb discovered and defused outside the home of the commander of the United Kingdom field army on 15 November 1989. The Opposition do not seem to treat this very seriously.

Then there were the car bomb that exploded at the married quarters in Colchester on 18 November 1989; the car bomb that exploded outside the Combined Services recruitment centre in Leicester on 20 February 1990, on which one Leicester Member, by his comments immediately afterwards, covered himself with such glory; and, most recently, the bomb that exploded at the Army recruiting office in Halifax on 25 February 1990. What a

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litany that is. But, alas, the Labour party does not want powers to enable the forces of law and order to deal with a terrorist threat that is unique in western Europe.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Surely the argument that the Prevention of Terrorism Act should be scrapped because it has not been successful in every case is fallacious. The same argument could be applied to the criminal law, and that would put us all out of business.

Mr. Patten: I can add nothing to what the hon. Gentleman has said. He is entirely right but, for reasons that I cannot understand, that point is lost on Labour Front-Bench Members.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Patten: Will the right hon. Gentleman forgive me if I do not give way? *[Interruption.]* I have three more questions to answer in five minutes.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the length of detention in this country under the PTA, as opposed to that in other countries. We have heard a good deal about seven days' detention without charge being draconian. In Belgium, detention by the police lasts for 24 hours, and is followed by indefinite detention without charges while investigations are carried out. In France, suspects can be detained for two years without charges. *[Interruption.]* I do not think that Labour Front-Bench Members like hearing the facts. In Italy the detention period is two years; in the Netherlands it is 106 days; in West Germany it is indefinite. Yet the Opposition insist on criticising our wish to allow detention for up to seven days to deal with the most serious terrorist threat in western Europe.

The right hon. Gentleman asked what was our justification for the exclusion order provision in the PTA. The power of exclusion is intended for those whom the Secretary of State is satisfied have been involved in some form of terrorist activity, but who cannot be prosecuted successfully—*[Interruption.]*—Opposition Members should listen before breaking out into uproar and outrage —because the evidence cannot be presented in court without endangering the sources of intelligence on which successful counter-intelligence depends. That point was made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland —but I suppose I have already praised the hon. Gentleman too much this evening; three tributes are too many for any speech.

Exclusion is a preventive measure, and one that the police firmly believe to be very useful in the fight against terrorism. They do not consider that any of the suggested alternatives would be effective.

I think it wise to listen to people who are much more experienced in the prevention of terrorism than I am, and we have cited a number of Conservatives with such experience; but why does not the right hon. Gentleman listen to what has been said by his noble Friend Lord Mason? I shall not quote what Lord Mason said in another place, but in an interview with the *Sunday Times*——

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): When?

Mr. Patten: On 13 February 1988. May I ask the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) to listen, rather than laughing and joking on the Front Bench? Lord Mason said of the Act:

"There is no telling how many lives it has saved."

All that Lord Mason gets from Labour Front-Bench Members is derision. But he knows more about the prevention of terrorism than all the Labour Front-Bench Members put together. They understand nothing about it. Tonight they have shown themselves to be in total intellectual confusion about their position, unable to explain their change in 1982 and why they will not back the renewal order, which I commend to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 136.

Division No. 106] **[11.44 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*

Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ray Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That, in the course of its consideration of the Matter of Scottish Local Government Finance, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 19th March at half-past Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 7th March, if proceedings on the Motions in the name of Sir Geoffrey Howe relating to Members' Interests have not previously been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock—

(1) in relation to the Motion then under consideration—

(a) if the Question last proposed from the Chair is the Main Question, call a Member to move any amendments thereto which he may have selected, and the Questions thereon shall be put forthwith, and then put the Main Question or the Main Question as amended; or

(b) if the Question last proposed from the Chair is for the amendment of the Motion, put that Question and then proceed as aforesaid; and

(2) in relation to any further such Motions as may then be made, put forthwith any questions necessary to dispose of proceedings thereon, including the Questions on any amendments thereto which he may have selected and which may then be moved.
—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Blood Transfusions (HIV Infection)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.56 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I speak to this Adjournment from the Back Benches partly to signal that I regard this as a non-party political issue for which there is considerable cross-party feeling. I do so also because, on this occasion, I speak as a constituency Member. It is unusual for a member of the shadow Cabinet to retire to the Back Benches willingly, and it requires unusual circumstances to persuade me to do so. On this occasion, there are unusual circumstances, which I have observed at first hand and have left me with a strong feeling that an injustice is being done.

I represent two constituents who are both HIV-infected as a result of blood transfusions in the Health Service. Neither is a haemophiliac—that is a relevant and important point which I will develop later. I suspect that my case is unique because there are only 19 such patients alive in Britain. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who will intervene in the debate with my permission, has one other case in her constituency.

The facts are quickly rehearsed, and I do not think that they are in dispute. As the Secretary of State said in his letter of 12 February, 32 such cases are known to have occurred from transfusions that took place in Britain. Of those 32, 13 have since died. Those figures give rise to two observations relevant to my case.

First, we are dealing with a small number. It is probable that there are still some in our community who have not yet been diagnosed, although they may have been infected from blood transfusion before 1985. It is equally probable that there will be few of them. Even if there were as many again as are at present alive and diagnosed, we are talking about a total throughout Britain of some 50 people.

Secondly, not only is that number small, but it is not getting any larger. There is no known case of a patient who has been infected with HIV as a result of blood transfusion since 1985. So we can tackle the public policy questions that arise from this group confident that they are few and that they are not getting larger.

The key issue of public policy to which I wish to address the mind of the House tonight, is the discrimination against this handful who are excluded from the special financial support that the Government have created for those haemophiliacs who are HIV-infected through blood products.

It is no part of my purpose tonight to debate those arrangements. I shall content myself with two brief observations. First, I welcome the fact that Ministers have created those special arrangements and, secondly, for balance, I express no view tonight on whether those arrangements are adequate or inadequate. But whichever view is taken on how adequate are the arrangements that have been made for haemophiliacs, the purpose of my Adjournment debate tonight is to query how on earth the Government can justify excluding from those arrangements this small handful of people who have also been infected as a result of treatment within the NHS but who happen not to be haemophiliacs.

As the Minister will be aware, as I have no doubt that he has seen the file, I have had correspondence over two

years with two successive Secretaries of State on this issue. I have repeatedly asked how they can justify leaving that tiny group of infected patients out in the cold. The attempts in the replies that I have received to make a logical defence of the arrangement are so threadbare that they have a hint of desperation. They have not convinced me, and I am authorised to say that they have not convinced the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), who was offered the same explanation in a parliamentary answer last month.

Briefly, three grounds are advanced by the Government for justifying the exclusion of those who are infected but are not haemophiliacs. First, they say that haemophiliacs were already disabled at the time of infection. All those people who have become infected through whole blood transfusion were so infected as a result of undergoing treatment within the NHS. By definition, at the time of that treatment they may well have been less fit than many haemophiliacs.

I put it to the Minister that the defence that is being arranged by the NHS throughout Britain against legal action being taken by those people is that, at the time of the transfusion, they were in a life-threatening condition and the risk from transfusion was substantially less than the probability of death without transfusion. In those circumstances, it is difficult now to tell those people that they should be excluded from the special arrangements because they were not disabled at the time of infection.

Secondly, it is argued that haemophiliacs were already financially disadvantaged by their condition and were barred from taking out life insurance. The relative financial security of the patients with whom we are concerned varies from circumstance to circumstance and from individual to individual. I would be interested to hear from the Minister whether any data have been collected by or are available to the Department to suggest that the financial background of haemophiliacs is worse than the financial circumstances of the small group whom we are debating tonight.

One of my constituents, whose financial circumstances I know in detail, was a single parent who for many years lived on benefit and had been on social security for some time before she became infected through blood transfusion. She very reasonably made the point to me that, when one is living on the extremely tight budget of social security for many years, the very last priority one is likely to have is paying the premiums on a life insurance policy. She has always been in financial difficulty and now has to subsist on £26 a week disablement benefit, quite unable to supplement that from earnings because it is now increasingly rare for her to be able to leave the house, far less obtain employment.

The third justification advanced by Ministers as to why the scheme should be confined to haemophiliacs is that haemophilia is hereditary, so more than one person may be infected in a family. That undoubtedly is the case, but it has rightly not stopped Ministers making payment to those families in which there is only one infected member. They make up the great majority of cases where payment has been made.

Not only is haemophilia hereditary—so is HIV infection. If there is no example of two such infected cases in the households of the small handful of people that we are discussing tonight, it is entirely fortuitous, and it does not exclude the possibility that such a case may be discovered in the future. We know that one patient was infected by a whole blood transfusion while giving birth, and in those circumstances it is as much a matter of luck as of anything else that there are not two infected people in that household.

The more one contemplates the cases of those who are haemophiliac and those who are not, the more difficult it becomes to see the basis for the distinction. Indeed, it becomes more obvious that there are greater similarities between the two groups than there are differences. The most obvious similarity is the financial pressure. Both groups face the same extra expenses for being HIV-infected. Both groups have a reduced opportunity to earn as a result of the infection, and both may be unable to discharge family responsibilities. In those circumstances, it is natural to find that many haemophiliacs strongly support the case of those who are infected as a result of NHS blood transfusions, although they are not haemophiliacs.

I understand that those who administer the Macfarlane Trust, funded by the Government to assist cases of hardship among haemophiliacs, would be willing to consider extending the trust to include those who are not haemophiliacs but who are infected through NHS treatment, provided that the Government also act to widen the terms of reference of the trust and to provide the additional modest amounts of money necessary to meet that additional responsibility.

Money cannot be the reason why the Government resist the case, because it is a very modest sum. The Government have already provided £34 million for special arrangements for ex gratia payments to those haemophiliacs who have been infected. The sum of money required to meet all the cases that we are discussing tonight would be less than an additional £1 million.

The real reason why the Government resist extension of the scheme is not revealed in the letters or the parliamentary answers on the matter. However, I have glimpsed in conversations with Ministers that the real reason that they are reluctant to extend the scheme to embrace those people who are not haemophiliac is the stark terror of their advisers at the precedent that such a payment would cause for other NHS patients.

I understand that a genuine problem exists, and I appreciate that a condition of the special scheme for haemophiliacs was that it was capable of being ring-fenced so as to protect the Department of Health against other patients who might make parallel claims on the back of that precedent. The problem is that the ring fence, important though it is, has been drawn in the wrong place. It should have included and not excluded those other patients who are HIV-infected as a result of blood transfusions.

I suggest to the Minister and to his advisers that, if they amend that obvious weakness in the ring fence, they will have a much more logical case to defend and it will be much easier for them to protect the integrity of the ring fence. I understand that in Canada, where they have adopted similar ex gratia payments for people infected through treatment within the health service, they have not made any distinction between those who are haemophiliac and those who are not, for precisely that reason.

In one respect, there is a distinction between the two groups. In talking to a constituent who has been to see me about her own problems, what came across most strongly was her sense of isolation. Because she does not belong to one of the normal risk groups, there is no support group

[Mr. Robin Cook]

with whom she can readily identify. I recently forwarded to the Secretary of State a letter from her which spelled out that sense of isolation. She asked why she was any different from any of the haemophiliacs.

I leave that question with the Minister. I know that he is an honest man and that he has a clear mind. He must be troubled to know that he can advance with a good face no logical reason for excluding this group of people from ex gratia payments that are already available to a much larger group.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to respond positively to the debate. If he cannot do so, I beg him at least not to dig himself further into the morass of logical inconsistencies by trying to defend the present position. I ask him to return to his Department and to say to his advisers, "You do not have to go out there and defend the present position. We cannot hold this line any longer. Let's get rid of this piece of petty discrimination, which is as much nonsense in logic as it is unjust in equity." Were he to convey that message to his advisers in his Department, I assure him that he would be speaking for almost all hon. Members.

12.10 am

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) for allowing me to speak in the debate.

I had a constituent who was in this position. She died just before Christmas. She was a lone parent—the mother of four children. I got to know her and the children extremely well during the time that she was ill. I have written to the Department of Health. I met the previous Secretary of State and got nowhere. I confirm what my hon. Friend said: that the reason is terror of future infection through needles, or whatever, not concern about justice for this small group of people.

My constituent, whose life was taken from her by the National Health Service through a blood transfusion, lived out her remaining years in poverty. She was unable to afford the kind of food that would have made the quality of her life better. She was unable to give her children the kind of treats that she wished to give them. It is insufferable that she was treated in that way by the Government and the country. It is insufferable, too, that her children have been left with absolutely nothing. She died in poverty and left nothing to them.

The Government will say that there is the possibility of legal action and compensation. If that ever comes to anything, it will be too late for my constituent. It may help her children, but she is dead. The quality of her life was massively diminished because she lived her remaining years in poverty. That is not good enough. I appeal to the Minister to do better than that for other people who are in the same position.

12.11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am sure that I speak for the whole House in extending heartfelt sympathy to all those who have suffered by contracting HIV and AIDS through blood transfusions—not necessarily whole blood transfusions; in some cases it has been through partial blood transfusion. Those comments are not trite; they are deeply felt and I am sure that all hon. Members, certainly on this side of the House, feel exactly the same.

The hon. Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook) eloquently expressed their views. The hon. Member for Livingston has campaigned long and consistently for the inclusion of the group that he has described within the provisions that have been made for haemophiliacs. I know that I shall not convince him tonight of the Government's position. His campaign will continue.

I am a great believer in debate being a process of discovery. All sides learn something from parliamentary debate. I do not relish ever being put in an invidious position by having to place too much reliance on logic, thus excluding ex gratia payments to a certain group of individuals when such payments have been made to other groups.

The position was set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) when he was Minister of State for Health, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) when he was Secretary of State for Social Services and, most recently, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. That was during the period from 1987 to 1990. The hon. Gentleman was right to raise the issue. It always deserves careful attention. I do not believe that additional payments to haemophiliacs—a second payment from the Macfarlane Trust—necessarily change the position, but they prod careful thought again about their predicament. It is tragic that a number of people have HIV infection as a result of receiving blood transfusions, and that some have developed AIDS and have died.

HIV was identified in 1984 and since 1985 we have screened blood in the United Kingdom. We all have great sympathy, of course, for those people and their families —indeed, for all people who have HIV and AIDS. It is estimated that 113 people in the United Kingdom have been infected with HIV through blood transfusions. Of those, 17 were transfused, we know, in the United Kingdom, 35 were transfused abroad, and for the remaining 61 the place of transfusion is unknown. According to a completely different source of statistics, including some overlap, the numbers of reported AIDS cases among transfusion recipients are 21 transfused in the United Kingdom, of whom 15 have died, and 26 transfused elsewhere, of whom 17 have died. It may be that some of the deaths are attributable to the patient's original illness and not to AIDS.

Fortunately, as medical and scientific knowledge about the screening of donors and testing donations has increased, the risks of HIV being acquired from blood transfusion in this country have been reduced considerably, I understand that the risk is now very remote indeed —about one in 1 million. However, we should not pretend that we shall ever get to a stage at which there is no risk from medical procedures.

The hon. Gentleman referred to haemophiliacs. The Government and the whole House acknowledge the tragedy of those who received infected blood products prior to 1985. Some 1,200 haemophiliacs were affected. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me that there is no doubt that, to an extent, haemophiliacs suffered a double tragedy. They had a disadvantage—there is no denying that—before the accidents occurred. The establishment of the first and second Macfarlane Trusts

acknowledged the tragedy of this group. Both, of course, were ex gratia payments: they were not compensation payments in the strict sense of the term. They were not in lieu of the legal right to sue. Indeed, that right remains.

The Department of Health maintains that there was no negligence. One is not denying the consequences, but I stress again that the Department of Health believed that it was offering the best available treatment, in good faith, at the time. Tragically, we know now that, before 1985, the consequences were not what was desired.

I presume that, although he did not say so, the hon. Member for Livingston would naturally extend his argument about blood transfussions to whether the transfusion occurred in the United Kingdom or abroad. It is interesting to note that the majority of cases in which we know where the transfusion occurred were abroad. Secondly, he would presumably extend his argument to all those who are living here. Thirdly, he would extend the provision without relying on exhaustive proof of the cause of HIV—it is very difficult to prove; and he would also extend his argument without seeking to ascertain whether the death would have occurred anyway—again, something that is very difficult to prove.

So one assumes that the group to which the hon. Gentleman is referring is a comprehensive one. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would seek to subdivide that group in—to use his own expression—any logical way, so I think that one must cast doubt on an estimate of £1 million. I do not seek this evening to debate the cost of any settlement in relation to this group; I simply put it to the hon. Gentleman that, even among those who have suffered through transfusion, it is very difficult to divide and subdivide, using his criteria, into categories which are or are not deserving.

I believe that it is very difficult for the hon. Gentleman honestly and logically to find any resting place in his argument. In terms of what he is essentially arguing for —his universal no-fault scheme, whether there is negligence or not, for medical accidents—I do not believe that there is any comfortable resting place for the hon. Gentleman. I put four examples to him. There are clearly cases that fall into the category of those who acquired HIV through skin grafts or organ transplants; the tragic cases of those who suffer serious side effects from the treatment of leukaemia; those who suffer brain damage as a result of anaesthesia during operations; and those who suffer post-operative complications having undergone neuro-surgery. I could go through a long list of categories for which other Members of Parliament would argue lucidly that there was real disadvantage and financial hardship as a result of an accident whether or not there was negligence.

Although he has argued his case very coherently, in his heart of hearts I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to draw a hard and fast line and say that we are dealing only with one particular group of individuals. If he were standing at this Dispatch Box, he would then be faced with exactly the same arguments from other hon. Members, arguing just as eloquently, to extend to the final resting place the argument he has put tonight, which is that there should be a universal no-fault scheme, whatever the cause and whether or not there was negligence.

I have looked at the vaccine damage compensation scheme again, anticipating that the hon. Gentleman might raise it—and he would have been right to do so. That scheme, which provides automatic payment for those families whose children have suffered as a result of vaccine damage, is justifiable because it is clearly in the public interest that all children should be vaccinated, and the small but significant risk is a price that society and the taxpayer should bear to ensure proper compliance with and acceptance of our vaccination programmes.

The argument for no-fault compensation with a preserved right to sue—I understand that some days ago in a Committee in the House the Member for Ladywood argued the case for no-fault compensation with the right to sue—would have the benefit of some automatic payment to relieve financial pressures. I strongly believe that that system, which is the only logical resting place for the hon. Gentleman's argument, would lead to a low, complicated and bureaucratic tariff, which would prove an impediment or discouragement to suit.

In cases of admitted negligence—such as in radiotherapy where, sadly, there have been some examples in recent years—the better system is one of interim payments by the health authority concerned, with the prospect of an ultimate out-of-court settlement or settlement in court. That would be a fairer and more flexible solution.

In cases of no or disputed negligence, as in this case, we have to rely on our free National Health Service and our social security system for support, with the right of any affected party to sue. That is a generous system and I hope, as I am sure do all right hon. and hon. Members, that there will soon be an effective treatment for HIV and for AIDS.

Mr. Robin Cook: First, the difficulty of relying on the courts as a means of recompense and compensation is that the time scale of the courts is wholly out of synchronisation with the time scale available to many sufferers—13 out of 32 people have already died. Secondly, although I am tempted to follow the Minister's argument about no-fault compensation, let me remind him that the Government, in their wisdom, have provided a scheme for haemophiliacs who are infected through blood products in the NHS. The point of the debate is not whether there should be a no-fault compensation scheme for all those who suffer cryogenic diseases or injury at the hands of NHS, but about how, having created such a scheme, the Government can exclude from it those small additional numbers.

Mr. Freeman: I accept that time is short for many who have HIV, although there is not necessarily a death sentence hanging over them. That is not disputed; indeed, it is one of the pressing arguments in favour of compensating the haemophiliacs who have become infected. It is a difficult issue, as one is asked to extend on behalf of the taxpayer an act of relative generosity and charity to one group of sufferers to another group, however logically the hon. Gentleman may group them by cause—and the common cause is blood transfusion.

The hon. Gentleman will concede that there is no hiding place for a Minister in terms of drawing a particular line if he were to move the line case by case beyond where it has already been drawn to relieve the financial pressures on a group which has suffered double jeopardy—double disadvantage, as it were. There is no logical resting place until we have a relatively generous, universal no-fault compensation scheme, and I do not believe that that would be in the best interests of the National Health Service.

I genuinely meant what I said at the outset: I do not believe that these debates are merely a pro forma exercise to enable an hon. Member to raise a constituency matter

[Mr. Freeman]

for the benefit of the media. There is a process of discovery in all these debates, because thought goes into their preparation and answer. I shall study the *Official Report* of the debate and bring the matter to the attention of Ministers at the Department of Health. It is only fair that I should do that, the hon. Gentleman having asked me to do so.

I cannot give him the assurance for which he asked, and he would not expect me to do so, but I join him again in expressing sympathy to those who have suffered. They have the sympathy of the Government. We shall reflect, as I said at the outset, on what the hon. Gentleman said. I can give absolutely no commitments, and I would not wish him to convey to his constituents or any others in this difficult position that the Government are about to rethink their already clearly declared position.

However, it would be wrong of me to slam the door in the hon. Gentleman's face and say that there is absolutely no prospect of any hope in future for this category of individuals. Of course we will reflect and listen carefully to the arguments, and I have set out as clearly and sympathetically as I can the Government's position.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 7 March 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Strathclyde Regional Council (to be presented under Section 7 of the Act): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday 13 March and to be printed. [Bill 92.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

1. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of recent events in South Africa, he will consider lifting all existing sanctions.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We shall maintain our policy of encouragement and pressure on the South African Government to bring about an end to apartheid, giving a measured response to progress as it occurs.

Mr. Carlisle: Is it Her Majesty's Government policy to offer British taxpayers' money to Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, as recent reports stated? If that is the case, does my right hon. Friend accept that many Conservative Members would find that policy somewhat repugnant, particularly because the ANC is still in favour of the armed struggle and Nelson Mandela still rejects the lifting of sanctions, which would create the conditions whereby peaceful reform could take place?

Mr. Hurd: I told the House last month that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is consulting hon. Members of different parties on whether it would be a good idea to set up a public body outside the Government, which could help and support groups or parties, whether in eastern Europe or southern Africa, as they move towards democracy. That is the state of affairs. Our whole emphasis in South Africa is on peaceful dialogue and helping to get that going.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the Government might lift the greatest sanction of all, the non-recognition of Bophuthatswana's independence, in the light of a recent statement by its President welcoming the release of Nelson Mandela and saying that it maintained its independence not because of apartheid, but through its historic identity?

Mr. Hurd: We are prepared to be reasonably unorthodox in these matters, but I do not believe that that particular step would help matters forward.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that after the Dublin summit, his European colleagues tried to keep Britain on board, and that the concept of an official visit to South Africa and of the carrot and stick policy was accepted by them? In the light of that, was it wise for the United Kingdom to break the resolution? As we are encouraging the Soviet Union to release its last political prisoners, should not we do the same in South Africa?

Mr. Hurd: I do not flatter myself that I attended a summit. At Dublin we put forward the compromise proposal that if other partners were prepared to move once the state of emergency was lifted, we would postpone any action on our part. I am sad that that compromise did not find immediate favour. I hope that perhaps as a result of the Troika Mission, or in other ways, all members of the Community will register what many of them feel and have expressed—the need to give practical encouragement to President de Klerk to continue along the road on which he has started.

Mr. Anderson: Will not the Foreign Secretary honestly admit that one of the crosses that he must bear is the perception among our allies and in Africa that the Prime Minister shares the view of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) on this issue? With his troubles in Dublin fresh in his memory, will he try to persuade the Prime Minister to give a clear undertaking that we shall not break any more of our legal international obligations in respect of sanctions?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have broken no legal obligations. We believe not only that we have taken the right action but that it would be stupid to do otherwise. We believe that it is wise to take a measured approach of not relaxing all sanctions, but taking limited steps to recognise and encourage what has been done. Others have recognised it in words, but we felt it wise to go further and give some recognition in substance. That is abundantly justified.

Mr. Wells: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be better not to move any further on sanctions or any other policy towards South Africa until he has had an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Nelson Mandela? Will he confirm that he will ask Mr. Mandela to this country for that purpose among others?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already invited Mr. Mandela to discuss the whole situation in South Africa with her. I hope, and am encouraged by some of the answers that he has been giving, that that may be possible.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made recently to the Government of Romania on the development of democracy in that country.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the Romanian Foreign Minister when he met him in Ottawa on 11 February that the British Government expect to see steady progress towards a pluralist democracy in Romania. Free and fair elections later in the year will be vital. I raised similar points when I visited Romania on 15 and 16 January.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that both Government and voluntary aid to Romania has been swiftly provided and that it is of great value? I pay tribute to the people of Newport, who have worked heroically to equip several lorries and dispatch them with medical aid. Is not the paramount need now to ensure that the elections in May are conducted fairly? In the unique situation in Romania where the apparatus of terror is still in place, is not it our right to intervene and use our influence in a thoroughly exceptional way to make sure that democracy is firmly rooted in that still unhappy land?

Mr. Waldegrave: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman talks a great deal of sense about Romania, which he knows well. He pays tribute to the people of Newport. I join him in that and hope that it will not be misunderstood in any way. I hope that he will forgive me if I also pay tribute to the people of Bristol, because Bristol Mencap, under the leadership of Mrs Hannam, exposed the horrors of mental asylums there. The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the Government's work. We have sent about £6 million of emergency aid, but all the voluntary aid is needed. As I said in my principal answer, it is now essential to ensure that there are free and fair elections, with access to the media for the opposition parties.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his response, welcome as it is in a sense, betrays a fundamental contradiction in British foreign policy? We are giving praise to and pushing Romania towards full democracy, for which we have no constitutional responsibility, yet we deny it to Hong Kong, for which we have constitutional responsibility. Is it not better to pursue those interests for which we have responsibility? Full democracy in Hong Kong may ameliorate some of the difficulties that the Government face in terms of giving passports—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that I would get into trouble with you, Mr. Speaker, if I launched into an answer on Hong Kong. It seems a little paradoxical to blame my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who introduced democracy in Hong Kong for doing so.

Latin America

3. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British support for the transition to democracy of Latin American countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): We warmly welcome the free elections that have taken place in a number of Latin American countries, most recently in Nicaragua. We have made it clear through numerous statements, sometimes with our European partners, that we strongly support the return to democracy of Latin America.

Mr. Arnold: Now that the second last dictatorship in Hispanic Latin America has returned to democracy with the defeat of Daniel Ortega and his Socialists by a woman leader, what are the prospects for the last such dictatorship in Latin America, which is supported by so many Labour Members, that is, that of Fidel Castro in Cuba?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that all parts of the House will join me in hoping that the people of Cuba will be given an early opportunity in free and fair elections to express their judgment of the way that their country has been run.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister agree that there has been considerable hypocrisy on the part of the Administration of the United States and the British Government in denying aid or trade to Nicaragua for the past 10 years, supporting a military attack upon that country and then taking pride in the fact that the Government of the Sandinistas called elections and abided by the results? Does he not think that the real problem and issue facing the people of all Latin America is the appalling debt crisis, which can be solved not by debt for equity arrangements, but only by proper commodity prices and a write-off of the debt burden that falls upon the poorest people of that continent?

Mr. Sainsbury: We applaud the manner in which President Ortega accepted the result of the elections. I must disagree with the hon. Gentleman about the real problem that faces the people of Nicaragua. It seems to me that they have clearly rejected the Socialist management of their economy that led to a massive drop in living standards and hyper-inflation, which devastated the economy of their country.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that the deputy Chief Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who has some Latin blood in him, is currently in the oriental republic of Uruguay? Does my hon. Friend agree that there is no one more suitable to represent our Government in that country?

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall not express a view about whether my hon. Friend is right about the Latin blood, or perhaps the Welsh blood, of my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). I am glad that he has already been to Nicaragua and, on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Government, he warmly congratulated Mrs. Chamorro on her victory and has already discussed with her the help that our Government can give to her Government.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Minister acknowledge the signal contribution of President Ortega and the Sandinistas in moving Nicaragua out of the Somoza dictatorship into a genuine democracy, with free elections, acknowledged as such by outside observers, and a peaceful transfer of power? Will the Government now resume substantial economic, bilateral aid to that country? Will they monitor

the progress of the new regime, to ensure that the unrivalled achievements of the Sandinistas in health and education is maintained?

Mr. Sainsbury: I should have hoped that the right hon. Gentleman heard what I said when I congratulated President Ortega on the manner in which he accepted the result of the elections. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will join me in calling upon the remaining Socialist countries of Central America and the Caribbean, including Cuba, to hold free and fair elections. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will acknowledge the error of the ways of all the Socialist local authorities that gave so much support to the Sandinistas—perhaps they will now return that money to their ratepayers.

Argentina

4. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina.

Mr. Sainsbury: I described the successful outcome of the talks in Madrid in a written reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on 16 February.

Both Governments reopened their embassies on 26 February and appointed chargés d'affaires, pending the arrival of ambassadors.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. I am pleased that both sides of the House recognise that we have restored diplomatic relations, but is he aware that many families lost loved ones in the fight for freedom and sovereignty? Will he assure the House and British people that sovereignty is not on the political agenda?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to be able to give my hon. Friend that assurance. Our position on sovereignty has not changed, nor will it, and I am glad to say that the Argentines appreciate that. The resumption of relations was made possible only because the Argentine Government agreed to talks about practical measures without prejudice to either side's position on sovereignty.

Mr. Dalyell: Is there any sign of certain Falkland islanders trying to sabotage the better relations?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not aware of any such signs.

Drugs

5. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international measures are in hand to destroy trade in illegal drugs.

Mr. Hurd: Some 90 states, including us, have now signed the United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. I recently went to the UN special session on drugs in New York, which adopted a political declaration and a global programme of action. We shall host a world ministerial summit in London in April to look at ways of reducing the demand for drugs and combating the cocaine threat. Within Europe, anti-drugs co-operation is steadily increasing.

Mr. Neale: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there are many millions of pounds in the international banking system as a result of drug trafficking? Does he further accept that while it can be detected when it first enters the system, once it is in the system it becomes almost impossible to detect? At the forthcoming conference, will he discuss with colleagues from overseas ways in which more reciprocal arrangements can be made between international banks to help detect and confiscate the money?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right, and that is one of the purposes of the financial action task force that was set up at the Paris summit last year. As my hon. Friend knows, under our 1986 legislation we have strong powers for tracking and investigating laundered money. I agree that it is a matter not just of legal powers, but of co-operation and discussion with the banks, and certainly in this country that has, on the whole, been forthcoming.

Ms. Abbott: Does the Secretary of State accept that commodity prices play a part in the drugs crisis? It is hard to persuade Colombian peasants to stop growing cocaine when the price of coffee has dropped through the floor.

Mr. Hurd: I have heard the argument about that relationship and there may be something in it. It is important when discussing help to Colombia, which we have given promptly and effectively, that we, the Colombian Government and other Governments should take into account what we expect Colombian farmers to grow so that they can have a proper standard of living if they abandon cocaine.

Mr. Allason Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite the problems highlighted in the Blom-Cooper report, Turks and Caicos, which is an island group and a British colony, is still a staging post for drugs to the United States? Does he have any plans to allow the United States Drug Enforcement Agency and other American anti-drug agencies right of hot pursuit into Turks and Caicos waters?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly, we have tightened up there and in other dependent territories in the Caribbean, as my hon. Friend knows. I shall study the state of play on his suggestion.

Israel

6. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had the opportunity to discuss with the Israeli Government the Amnesty report detailing their treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have frequently expressed concern to the Israeli Government about abuses of Palestinian human rights in the occupied territories. In particular, we have raised with Israel two of the cases investigated by Amnesty in its recent report.

Mr. Watson: Will the Minister join me in welcoming the decision made last week by the Israeli authorities to reopen two of the further education colleges in the west bank after a closure of two years? Will he reaffirm the Government's stated position that they wish the other 15 further education colleges and all six universities to be reopened and to stay open? Does he agree that one way to bring pressure towards that end would be to give support to the EC decision to review scientific agreements with Israel?

Mr. Waldegrave: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should all press for the higher education institutions to be reopened. I had the opportunity to put that suggestion strongly to Minister Olmert, who was in this country this week. However, moving towards EC sanctions is not right at this stage. We welcome the steps that have been taken, and reinforce them by saying that the universities should be reopened, as the hon. Gentleman said.

Sir Dennis Walters: Bearing in mind the fact that all member states of the European Community are co-signatories of the fourth Geneva convention and that the convention is being flouted daily by the Israeli occupying forces in the west bank, although the convention applies to the occupied territories, should not that violation be pursued more vigorously by Her Majesty's Government and the Community?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Israeli Government are well aware of the vigour with which Her Majesty's Government and other Governments in the Community pursue their protests on these matters. The responses—sometimes of complaint—from the Israeli Government seem to show that our protests carry some weight.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the Minister agree that the actions taken by the Israelis on the west bank would be further heightened if the threat by Prime Minister Shamir to resettle Soviet Jews on the west bank were followed through? Does he think that Soviet Jews have the right to emigrate wherever they want, but that the countries to which they want to emigrate can decide whether to accept them? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be far better if we and the Israelis dealt with anti-Semitism wherever it arises in the world instead of using it as an excuse for emigration?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can only repeat the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who said of the Soviet Jews, when addressing the Board of Deputies of British Jews:

"it would be a very ironic and unjust reward for all our efforts, if their freedom were to be at the expense of the rights, the homes and the land of the people of the Occupied Territories."

That was a clear statement of the right position.

German Reunification

7. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to facilitate peaceful and non-threatening German reunification.

10. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonweath Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Hurd: Our many discussions with members of the Federal German Government are proof of our close relations. I will be having further talks in Bonn next week with Herr Genscher and Chancellor Kohl. As I explained to the House on 22 February, it was agreed at Ottawa last month that Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, the United States, France and the Soviet Union, and of the two German states, would meet to discuss the external aspects of German reunification.

Mr. Boswell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that German reunification is as desirable as it is inevitable? Now that the Polish frontier issue is out of the way, will he use our membership of the four-plus-two mechanisms to ensure that the case is made positively for all-German membership of NATO as a contribution to the continuing stability of Europe? Finally, will he ensure that Britain plays a full and appropriate part in the rehabilitation of East German's economy and environment?

Mr. Hurd: Now that the framework for discussing external aspects of German unification is coming into place, we can certainly give a confident welcome to the process of German unification, which we have always supported in principle. We are strongly in favour of a united Germany being in NATO and we support what Chancellor Kohl and Herr Genscher have said on that subject. It will inevitably be for the German Government and people to shoulder the main task of restructuring and modernising East Germany, but I hope that British firms and interests will see the opportunities, for example, in the joint ventures, which will undoubtedly exist.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend particularly welcome yesterday's decision by the Federal Republic to negotiate a treaty on the Polish borders? Does he agree that that most happily coincides with a major objective of British Government policy? Does he further agree that the events surrounding the two Germanies further underline the importance of our maintaining an ever closer relationship with the French?

Mr. Hurd: We strongly welcome the outcome of the discussions in Bonn yesterday and the decision of the German Government to accept the need for a treaty with Poland about her frontiers. We have been urging that, as my hon. Friend says, for a long time.

As I told the House on 22 February, I believe that, quite apart from any German considerations, it is important for both Britain and France to learn to work together more effectively, not just on these but on a wide range of issues.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that despite the irresponsible antics of Herr Kohl in recent weeks, compared with the more responsible attitude of Herr Genscher and the SPD, there is a problem with the German ethnic minorities in Silesia and other parts of former German territory now in Poland, and that it behoves any Polish Government to act in accordance with the Helsinki accords on human rights? What initiatives is the right hon. Gentleman taking to ensure that those accords are strengthened, to defuse tensions in those possible future troublespots?

Mr. Hurd: It is, of course, right that those who signed the Helsinki Final Act should respect the human rights obligations that they assumed. It is also correct that throughout many parts of central and eastern Europe there are problems about minorities dating back many centuries. Those are becoming more difficult to handle as countries emerge from the Communist freezer, if I may put it that way. That is one reason why I have suggested that as part of the CSCE machinery there might be a way of conciliating in such matters. It is for sovereign states, for individual countries, to decide how they respect those obligations. It is not a matter of shifting borders in an attempt to solve those problems. That is not the answer.

Mr. Robertson: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the Opposition also welcome the statement yesterday by Chancellor Kohl on the Oder-Neisse border? We have also welcomed progress towards the unification of the two German states and the freedom that the German people now have to make that decision. We acknowledge the extremely difficult task of the Foreign Secretary in repairing the damage to British-German relations caused by the Prime Minister's crass insensitivity. Will he now ensure that the formal and permanent confirmation of Germany's borders with her neighbours is made an urgent and fundamental objective in the two-plus-four—not four-plus-two—talks which will take place in Europe and in other forums where these matters will be discussed?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot see much point in what the hon. Gentleman says. I am against attempts to divide Foreign Ministers from Heads of Government in Bonn or elsewhere, and I do not think that such attempts are very likely to succeed. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Poles are entitled to a treaty. That is what I have just told the House. The way forward on that is now clear. It is also right that the Poles are entitled to be present when that is discussed. It cannot be dealt with exclusively in the two-plus-four or four-plus-two talks.

Sir Russell Johnston: Despite the Foreign Secretary's opposition in principle to separating or attempting to separate Foreign Secretaries from Governments, does he accept that many of us were very pleased when he gave overt support to Herr Genscher in the internal argument in the German Administration? Does he agree that those who fear a united Germany would, in practical terms, have their fears reduced if we pressed ahead with the unification of the European Community in which Germany would be one part and in which in due time national borders would become much less significant?

Mr. Hurd: I am all in favour of pushing ahead with fresh impetus inside the European Community, first of all by completing the single market. Where I may differ from the hon. Gentleman and from some people in the Community is that I do not think of that exclusively in terms of institutions.

Sir Peter Blaker: Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on securing international agreement that the external aspects of German unification are matters not just for the two Germanys but for other countries as well? Does he recall that only a few weeks ago the British Government were accused of being the only Government out of step on this issue? I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the fact that now everybody else is in step with us—except, apparently, the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson).

Mr. Hurd: It was thought by learned commentators that we were a bit out of step when six or eight weeks ago we emphasised that external matters connected with German unification affected Germany's allies and other European countries. We were criticised for stressing that, but now everybody is placing the same stress and emphasis on these matters.

Nicaragua

8. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy following the outcome of the Nicaraguan elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The election, which was judged to be free and fair, gave the people of Nicaragua an opportunity to exercise their right to choose their own Government. We warmly welcome this development, which marks a further strengthening of democracy in the region, and look forward to working with the Government of President-elect Violetta Chamorro.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that figures in the *Financial Times* indicate that the cost of the American intervention in the election amounted to £2 per elector, which translated into British terms would represent a total of £86 million—even more than the £14 million that the Conservatives spent at the last election? Will he make representations to the American Government to ensure that they intervene similarly in the eastern Europe democracies so that at least there may be fair play throughout the free world? Will he also ensure that the British Government make a contribution higher than the know-how fund of £50 million rather than tie the eastern European democracies into the international debt system?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am interested to note that the hon. Gentleman, like the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), still wears his Sandino badge with pride. I would point out to the hon. Gentleman that of the $9 million allocated by Congress for the Nicaraguan elections the vast majority went to pay for observers and for the supreme electoral council. Only $1·8 million went to UNO.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am constantly being urged to speed up Question Time. I ask hon. Members to put one question. If they do that, we shall get through more questions.

Mr. Norris: Will my hon. Friend accept from me a slightly less fulsome tribute to ex-President Ortega, whose election may have been free on the day but was most certainly not fair, given the widespread intimidation, the manipulation of state media, and the abuse of Government resources by the Sandinista regime, whose support from the eastern bloc far diminished anything from the United States? Will my hon. Friend therefore keep the transitional period under very careful review, because there is much evidence that several of the commandantes of the revolution are less than convinced of the desirability of a return to democracy?

Mr. Sainsbury: I note what my hon. Friend has said—and, of course, he personally observed the election. I join him in hoping that there will be a peaceful and full transfer on the due date. It is interesting that the United Nations observers—indeed, all observers—commented on the massive abuse by the Sandinistas of state facilities, including, in particular, the premises of the television station and the army. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, they also received very substantial help from overseas.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister accept that, as one of the international observers, I can confirm the view of almost all the observers that the elections were conducted fairly, to the great credit of the Sandinista Government? President Ortega has not only gracefully accepted the result *[Interruption.]* I hope that Conservative Members will do the same at the next election here—*[Interruption.]* Ortega is co-operating in the orderly transfer of power, which is now jeopardised by the failure of the Contra terrorists to disband. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes a lot of time.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister say what the Government are doing to help the Nicaraguan Government by pressing the Contras to lay down their arms immediately?

Mr. Sainsbury: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, we look for the early disbandment of the Contras and for their reintroduction into Nicaraguan society. I agree with the hon. Gentleman, who was himself an observer, that on the day, the election was free and fair, as all the observers have commented. Indeed, it was the presence of the international observers—that very strong presence, and only that—which reassured the people of Nicaragua that they could cast their votes in secrecy and without fear of retribution.

British Military Equipment

9. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that British military equipment supplied to Jordan is not used by Iraq to its benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Careful control is exercised over our export of defence equipment. Each proposed sale is subject to stringent licensing procedures, including an assessment of foreign policy and regional security implications.

Mr. Hayes: Will my hon. Friend confirm that all weapons sold by Britain to Jordan will be used solely for that country's self-defence capability and that none of the weaponry will be used by a potential aggressor to the state of Israel?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that it was no secret that Jordan and Iraq were close allies during the Gulf war. Jordan is fully committed to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel problem. We intend to continue our support for King Hussain and his regime as they are an important part of the peace process.

Mr. Archer: In view of the joint training arrangements established by the air forces of Jordan and Iraq, what possible contribution can the supply of equipment make to peace in the middle east?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know that a story in the *Jerusalem Post* said that joint Jordanian-Iraq training was taking place, but we believe that story to be exaggerated. It seems unlikely—we have had no such comment from anyone else—that it is threatening to Israel.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has said that Jordan is committed to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel problem. Would that continue if the Israelis settled large numbers of Soviet Jews in the occupied territories? How would that affect the Government's policy on that issue?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already quoted the Israeli Prime Minister's clear statement on this. Whether or not he was misinterpreted—I hope that he was—he aroused many anxieties in the middle east by appearing to endorse the process of the settlement of emigrés from Soviet Jewry in the occupied territories. In our view, it would be illegal for such settlements to take place.

European Commission

11. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the President of the European Commission; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs next expects to meet the President of the Commission at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 April, at which a range of EC issues will be discussed.

Mr. Hoyle: Will German reunification be on the agenda? Will the Secretary of State tell the President of the Commission that under article 23 of the West German basic law, reunification must be not absorption of East Germany into West Germany but on a basis of equality and partnership leading to a coming together of both Germanys on equal terms?

Mr. Maude: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has said already, the way in which the two Germanies unite is essentially an internal matter for them. We have stressed for some time that there are effects on others outside which the Germanys must take into account. As a result of the initiative that my right hon. Friend took, there is now a framework which will enable proper account to be taken of all these matters.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that an opportunity will be taken to discuss with the President of the Commission the outcome of the Nicaraguan elections, given that the supervision by the United Nations and the role of the Organisation of American States and of observers from both sides of the House—I was lucky enough to be one—suggest that a secret vote has led to an important development for democracy? Will my hon. Friend assure us that Europewide co-operation on further assistance for Nicaragua will be explored urgently?

Mr. Maude: I am sure that that will be the case. It is just possible that the amount of interest that has been expressed today in the Nicaraguan elections will not spread quite so far across Europe as might be thought. However, it is a matter which will be discussed.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Minister discuss with the President of the European Commission the failure of the Minister's own visit to Hanoi to try to get acceptance from the Vietnamese of the voluntary return, let alone compulsory return, of Vietnamese boat people? As the hon. Gentleman failed absolutely in that endeavour, and as the problem continues to exist, would not it be a good idea to ask our partners to co-operate in seeking an

international solution? Would the hon. Gentleman agree that part of that solution is not to offer economic aid as part of a deal, which he tried to do, but to reopen European Community aid, United States aid and United Kingdom bilateral aid as the best way of establishing a secure economy in Vietnam so that the Vietnamese would no longer feel that they had to leave their country to better themselves?

Mr. Maude: Again, it is just possible that Mr. Delors did not follow my travels to Vietnam with quite the flattering degree of attention that the right hon. Gentleman did. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that I achieved some extremely useful results during my visit, including a fivefold increase in the number of Vietnamese boat people who will return to Vietnam under the United Nations voluntary scheme. That has been widely welcomed.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about seeking an international solution to the problem. He may not have noticed that there already is one. At the Geneva conference last June a comprehensive plan of action was agreed. As the right hon. Gentleman will know from having studied it carefully, it involves the mandatory repatriation to Vietnam of those who are not refugees. The entire international community now subscribes to the principle of mandatory repatriation. The Archbishop of York, having just visited Hong Kong, has expressed strong support for a resumption of mandatory repatriation. The only people who do not seem to have understood the position are the right hon. Gentleman and his friends.

Human Rights, Soviet Union

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Soviet authorities about human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have a continual dialogue with the Soviet authorities about human rights. We raised both individual cases of concern and the wider need for institutionalised reform during the meeting of the Anglo-Soviet working group on human rights on 9 January. I followed this up when I visited the Soviet Union from 21 to 25 January.

Mr. Marshall: Did my right hon. Friend make any representations to the Soviet authorities about the evil activities of Pamyat and the threatened pogrom of 5 May? Is he aware that 50,000 people with exit visas are awaiting flights to Israel? Will he make representations to the Russian authorities suggesting that they allow direct flights between Moscow and Tel Aviv?

Mr. Waldegrave: I discussed the first issue with Soviet leaders and with representatives of the Jewish community in Moscow. I am happy to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the Soviet Government are in the process of prosecuting Pamyat under their law, which is rather similar to ours, dealing with the stirring up of racial hatred. We should watch that carefully, but we should welcome it as proof that the Soviet authorities are taking the matter seriously. Direct flights are a matter for the two Governments concerned.

Mr. Janner: Will the Minister accept that there is real anxiety among thousands of Soviet Jews about renewed pogroms and anti-Semitic harassment? Does he accept that a tribute should be paid to Mr. Gorbachev as thousands are now leaving freely to go to live in Israel? As Israel, unlike nearly all its neighbours, labours under the advantage of being a democracy and thus cannot direct its citizens, however new, on where they may or may not live, does the Minister accept that fewer than 0·5 per cent. have settled outside the green line, which nails the propaganda lie that there is a danger of mass settlement—*[Interruption.]* It is no laughing matter for those whose lives are in the process of being saved.

Mr. Waldegrave: We certainly pay tribute to the much better regime which Mr. Gorbachev and his colleagues have introduced. One of my hon. Friends recently went to Moscow, at the invitation of the Russians, to discuss the drafting of the law. These are all better steps which we welcome. On the latter point, although what the hon. and learned Gentleman says is true, the concern in the middle east about that arose after some rather unguarded remarks —to put it mildly—from Prime Minister Shamir. To talk as he did seemed liable to lead to exactly the outcome that has resulted, which is that everyone is exceedingly worried.

Hungary

14. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of his discussions following his recent visit to Hungary.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Hungary from 27 February to 1 March and had talks with members of the Government and representatives of the opposition. I welcomed the steps which Hungary is taking to full democracy, including free elections on 25 March. I confirmed our support through the know-how fund. The prospects for full and effective use of the fund are good.

Mr. Field: I thank my right hon. Friend for his very full answer and the extension of the know-how fund from Poland to Hungary, as well as 40 other projects. Does he agree, however, that the real test of merit for the Soviet Union is the timing of the withdrawal of its troops? Having so recently visited the area, can he say why there is such a choke point at the border station of Csap, which also involves the withdrawal from Czechoslovakia? Will he, on behalf of the Conservative side of the House, wish the Hungarian people great success in the election and in overthrowing a Communist Government for the first time in 40 years?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is well informed and quite right. There has been a hiccup in discussions between the Hungarians and the Soviet Government, not on the principle of Soviet withdrawal of troops but on the timing. My hon. Friend may have put his finger on one of the reasons for that—the congestion on the railways which serve for evacuating Russian troops from Czechoslovakia and from Hungary. I join my hon. Friend in hoping that the elections on 25 March are a resounding success and that there is a high turnout.

Mr. Winnick: It would be useful if Conservative Members were committed to free elections everywhere, as Opposition Members are. Will the Foreign Secretary take the opportunity arising from the question to praise the Soviet leadership not only for bringing about the rule of

law and parliamentary democracy, or the beginnings of it, in the Soviet Union but for pursuing a policy in eastern Europe whereby at long last the people in those countries will be able to elect the Governments that they want without any interference from the Soviet Union?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly the Soviet Union is now allowing things to happen in eastern Europe which previously it suppressed, but the main tribute for that is due to the people of Hungary who have insisted on that and have been pioneering and making a success of it.

Germany

15. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I saw the Federal Chancellor on 6 February, Mr. Genscher with the Prime Minister on 15 February and repeatedly since, Defence Minister Dr. Stoltenberg on 22 February, and the German Democratic Republic Foreign Minister, Mr. Fischer, on 13 February. We discussed a number of subjects, including the external aspects of German unification.

Mr. Tredinnick: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the work that he has done to establish a proper framework to discuss German unification, particularly the two-plus-four formula, but is he aware that there is widespread concern in Poland, which has sovereignty over the former German territories of Silesia and Pomerania, that it has been insufficiently consulted? Will my right hon. Friend therefore consider making representations to European executive representatives next time to the effect that a two-plus-four-plus-one formula would be in order so as to accommodate Poland's worries?

Mr. Hurd: I discussed that with the Polish Foreign Minister in Ottawa and the Polish Prime Minister discussed it with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself here in London. It is accepted, first, that the Poles should have a treaty defining their western border and, secondly and obviously, that when those arrangements are discussed the Poles will have to be there.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that it would be in the interests of European security and East-West relations if a unified Germany were declared a demilitarised zone and the new Germany neither in NATO nor in the Warsaw pact? Would not that be helpful to both sides?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member should consult some of his friends in eastern Europe on that as it is a prospect which they are beginning specifically to repudiate. There is a growing consensus, which does not yet include the Soviet Union, that it would be sensible for the stability of Europe if a united Germany were in NATO.

Mr. William Powell: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to discuss the prospective currency reform of the Ostmark with the Governments of East and West Germany? Has my right hon. Friend read the reports that there are apparently 155 billion Ostmarks in savings which will need to be converted, and that there is an international dimension to this because unless the matter is handled sensitively it may well result in a high level of inflation going out of Germany?

Mr. Hurd: That has been touched on from time to time in discussions, but I would not claim to be an expert on it. Expert views on the point that my hon. Friend raises are varied, but I believe that the matter is being handled with caution by the relevant German authorities, bearing in mind the kind of worry that my hon. Friend has expressed.

Vietnam

16. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed Vietnam and Cambodia with the American Secretary of State.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend and I discussed Cambodia and the Vietnamese boat people with Secretary Baker on 11 December. The question of the Vietnamese boat people was also discussed on 30 January, during my right hon. Friend's visit to Washington.

Mr. Mullin: Did the Minister put it to the Americans that until they call off their war against Vietnam and end the aid, trade and diplomatic embargo against that country, and withdraw the vetoes in connection with the World Bank, the IMF and various other organisations, there will be no prospect of solving the boat people problem and the flow of refugees will continue indefinitely?

Mr. Maude: We took the opportunity to explain to the American Secretary of State that Vietnam is a country undergoing a process of reform and is a different regime from what it was. We have also made it clear to the Vietnamese that we would not feel able to resume full bilaterial relations, including the resumption of economic aid to them, unless they felt able to fulfil their full international obligations, including especially their obligations to their own people.

Mr. Lester: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most helpful things that could now happen, following the discussions in Jakarta, would be for a United Nations mission to be allowed to go into Cambodia to verify that the Vietnamese have withdrawn and to deal with the question of Vietnamisation, which is constantly heard at every international meeting as a means of preventing further progress towards a settlement?

Mr. Maude: It is regrettable that there was not a more favourable outcome to the talks in Jakarta. The sort of mission to which my hon. Friend refers could certainly be considered again, but I do not think that it would be sensible to look at the practicalities at this stage until the framework for a comprehensive settlement is fully in place.

Central America

17. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to visit Central America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Central America.

Mr. Skinner: If he does, and if the Government give financial aid to Nicaragua, how much money will be

handed over? Will he ensure that any aid given to Nicaragua goes towards genuine demobilisation of the Contras? To use the Foreign Secretary's words, will he ensure that the money is used for tractors and not tanks?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am glad to confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) has already discussed those matters with President Violetta Chamorro. The sort of aid that we would be considering particularly would be technical co-operation covering matters such as English language teaching and scholarships, rather than the subjects to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the Minister try to convince Labour Members that they should abide by the advice on the placard carried by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) outside the American embassy the Sunday before the election and respect the result in Nicaragua?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to know that the result is being generally respected. As I have said, we hope that there will be a full and peaceful transfer of power in due course and that the result will be accepted by all elements of the previous Sandinista Government.

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind that the Somoza regime was overthrown because Mrs. Chamorro's husband was killed and that the Sandinistas were totally in association with her and others who were then fighting the dictatorship? Will he also bear in mind that in 1984—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should ask just one question.

Mr. Heffer: There was a general election in 1984 which was won by the Sandinistas. They won that election fairly. Now, having lost the latest election, they have handed over power—*[Interruption.]* It is about time that Her Majesty's Government decided to support democracy instead of arguing that it was a Marxist-Leninist Government when part of that Government were members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's verdict on the earlier election. I am happy to confirm, however, that all the observers have pronounced that the election which has just taken place and which resulted in a decisive rejection of the Socialist management of the Sandinistas, was indeed free and fair.

Eastern Europe

18. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government are making available to the democracies in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: The know-how fund which is already operating in Poland will shortly be extended to Hungary, and in due course to other eastern European countries which show a clear commitment to reform. We are also contributing to multilateral aid efforts, notably the stabilisation fund for Poland, the planned European bank for reconstruction and development and the Community's food and humanitarian help for Poland and Romania.

Mr. Thompson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that that assistance is in addition to, and quite separate from, the United Kingdom's overseas aid budget? Will he say a little more about specific help for Poland, particularly in regard to the know-how fund?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm that the answer to my hon. Friend's first question is yes. We have given a range of help to Poland. There are now more than 40 projects operating. Some of the biggest have been the establishment of capital markets, a programme for privatisation, and assistance with the administration of local and municipal authorities and the establishment of civil law. Those are three examples among many.

Vietnam

19. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with what countries he has had discussions *(a)* resettlement of the boat people and *(b)* resurrecting the economy of Vietnam.

Mr. Maude: I discussed the subject of Vietnamese boat people most recently with European Community and Association of South-East Asian Nations Ministers on 16 and 17 February and with the Vietnamese Government in Hanoi from 19 to 21 February. Arrangements to resettle over a three year period boat people who are refugees were agreed as part of the comprehensive plan of action adopted by the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees last June in Geneva.

Mr. Young: Is not the real stumbling block to the economic regeneration of north Vietnam the American Government's refusal to allow economic regeneration to take place unless they can officially sanction the type of government which operates in Hanoi? In the name of humanity, can we ask the American Government to stop fighting the wars of the past and to help with the regeneration of that area, as that is the solution to the problem?

Mr. Maude: As I have already said, we have pointed out that reform is taking place in Vietnam so there is no longer quite the same regime as there was. I know that in Vietnam there is a good deal of interest in the resumption of aid from the West, but, as I have made clear, before that can take place we shall want to be satisfied that Vietnam is fully accepting its obligations under international law and particularly the obligation to accept its own people back.

House of Fraser

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on House of Fraser. I have today published the report of the inspectors appointed under section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate the affairs of House of Fraser Holdings plc.

I should explain to the House that in this matter I have three main responsibilities as Secretary of State: first, to decide whether to publish the report. This I have now done, as soon as possible after I was informed by the prosecution authorities that they had withdrawn their objection to publication.

Secondly, I had to consider whether to apply to the court to disqualify any director under section 8 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986. I have concluded that it would not be in the public interest to do so. Anyone who reads the report can decide for themselves what they think of the conduct of those involved.

Thirdly, I also have responsibility for decisions on whether to refer mergers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That responsibility was fully discharged by my predecessor. He had six months from July 1988 in which to consider the findings of the inspectors' report and to decide whether to refer the matter. He concluded in November 1988 that a reference to the MMC would not be appropriate. The House of Lords held that that was a proper decision. I cannot reopen the decision taken at that time. We have since taken steps in the Companies Act 1989 to make it a specific criminal offence for anyone knowingly or recklessly to mislead the competition authorities.

No other matters require action from me. I have passed the report to all those authorities concerned with enforcement and regulation so that they may consider whether to take action under their various powers.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): If a statement lasting for less than two minutes is an indication of the importance that the Secretary of State and his Department attach to an issue as major as this—for we are talking about fraud on a grand scale—we are astonished. Is it not extraordinary that the Department of Trade and Industry is to take no action, despite the conclusions of a 750-page report produced by the Department itself?

The first paragraph of chapter 2 states:

"The Fayeds dishonestly misrepresented their origins, their wealth, their business interests and their resources to the Secretary of State, the OFT, the press, the HOF Board . . . and their own advisers."

Is it not extraordinary that no action is to be taken, although the evidence received by the inquiry was false—and known to be false—at the time it was provided, and although it is now known that, in the words of the report, "it is likely that the Fayeds used . . . the Sultan of Brunei and the opportunities afforded to them by the possession of wide powers of attorney"?

Only constraints on the powers of the inspectors prevented them from discovering conclusive evidence on precisely that point.

Is the Secretary of State seriously telling us that no action is to be taken against any of the people who made those dishonest representations—against the Fayeds themselves, or against their supporting cast, the bankers Kleinwort Benson and the solicitors involved? Apparently, no action is to be taken against anyone who was engaged in the perpetration of—again, I quote from the report—

"a massive fraud against the Government".

Now that we know that the deal was cleared by the then Secretary of State in only 10 days—although allegations that have now been found to be true were known to him, and had been made with considerable vigour—will the Secretary of State explain why the Government insisted on clearing the deal in such a remarkably short time? Why did they not investigate the allegations in more depth? Why did they not fulfil their responsibility to protect the public interest, and why did the Secretary of State's statement not acknowledge the final responsibility that his Department must carry for clearing a fraudulent takeover? *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may find it reasonably amusing, but Opposition Members are interested in defending the public interest. Does not the proper protection of the public interest require action a little less casual than a few telephone calls and a statement? Does it not require an in-depth investigation?

What are the lessons for the future? First, does the Secretary of State accept any of the six lessons set out in chapter 25 of the report, including the need for closer supervision and tighter regulation? Will he insist that those lessons are acted on by the regulatory bodies, and present proposals to that effect? Above all, how can the right hon. Gentleman conclude—despite the clear direction in chapter 1 of the report, on page 12, that the directors who gave false information to the inspectors should be disqualified—that it would

"not be in the public interest"

to attempt to disqualify them?

Does not the report cry out for a proper monopolies and mergers policy that is not based simply on considerations of competition, but takes account of the wider public interest? It is clear, not merely from his failure to act but from the manner of his doing so, and from today's pathetic statement, that the Secretary of State has abandoned that public interest.

Mr. Ridley: In my statement I set out clearly the extent of my responsibilities in this matter. The House and the hon. Lady can judge for themselves the content of the report and what is revealed therein. The hon. Lady said that the allegations should be investigated, but I advise her that they have been investigated at great length and set out by the inspectors. It is for her to form her own judgment.

The hon. Lady referred to criminal prosecutions. They are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. The hon. Lady now knows that, on the advice of the Directors of Public Prosecutions and of the Serious Fraud Office, he has now decided that no prosecution shall be taken.

The hon. Lady also mentioned the advisers to the various parties in the report. The report has been sent to the Law Society and to the Bank of England. They are the regulatory authorities for those bodies and it will be up to them to decide whether they wish to take any action.

The hon. Lady then asked whether the inspectors' recommendations had been taken note of in relation to various aspects of company law. Under the Companies Act 1989, which the House enacted just before Christmas, no fewer than four major changes, which I will spell out to

the hon. Lady if she would like to know what they were, were made dealing with the inspectors' four main recommendations to amend company law.

In two of the cases about which a recommendation to amend company law was made, my predecessor came to the conclusion that no amendment was necessary because the powers were already there. As I said, the main recommendation was that giving false evidence to the competition authorities should now become a specific criminal offence. Giving false evidence to inspectors is already a criminal offence—and has been for some time. Whether prosecutions arise under those two powers is for the prosecuting authorities, not for me.

It is not my intention to change the terms of reference of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. This matter would never have come before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the first place if issues of competition had been the sole guidelines, subject, of course, to the national interest considerations, which were to be considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the case of a possible reference.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is not the first Secretary of State to be involved in this matter, and that he can take no blame for this situation? However, will he tell the House a little more, first, about the position of the advisers? Is he satisfied that, as it stands, the law deals fully with the recommendation in the report about the conduct of advisers in these difficult circumstances?

Secondly, will he tell us a little more about disqualification and why he has concluded that it would be unwise to use his powers to disqualify in this case? How would the disqualification work in the case of this particular public company? Would it have a major effect on it? How would it work in this case if those criticised in the report were disqualified from being directors of a public company?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I confirm that the advisers concerned are subject to their own regulatory regimes—to the Law Society, the Bank of England or others in investment and banking matters. It is for those authorities to decide whether any action is necessary as a result of the publication of the report.

My right hon. Friend's second question was about disqualification. I shall give him a full answer. Under section 8 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, I may apply to the court for a disqualification order if I consider that it is expedient in the public interest for a disqualification order to be made. I have considered the matter carefully and have concluded that it would not be in the public interest to seek such an order in this case. Those who read the report can make their own assessment of the conduct of those involved. The provisions of that act are intended not as a punishment, but as a protection for the public. I can add nothing further to that.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State agree with the finding of the report in chapter 23 that it is in the public interest that the confusion which occurred in this case should not occur again? It appears that that is precisely what he will allow. Does not the report show that every fail-safe mechanism set up by Parliament to protect the public in free and fair commerce failed in this instance, disastrously trimmed as the mechanisms were in July 1984 by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that, if he continues to take no action he will be condoning a money-laundering charter which could be used in future by any Mafia godfather or international drug baron who cares to use it in the same way?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot go into the wider views which the right hon Gentleman mentioned at the end of his supplementary question. The purpose of company law and inspections of the sort that we are discussing is to protect the interests of shareholders. The shareholders of the original House of Fraser board were paid in full in cash. The only shareholders of House of Fraser Ltd. are now directors; there are no outside shareholders. In no respect are the interests of the public, to which the right hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention, not protected by the present arrangements.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Will my right hon. Friend accept my thanks for finally publishing the report? Does he accept that many of us regret that the decision was made that it could not be published earlier? After all, in more recent times the directors of National Westminster Bank and others have been prosecuted after the publication of a report. As the report is large and we have only recently seen it, could he direct the attention of hon. Members to any page in which there is criticism or culpability alleged of either the Director General of Fair Trading, whose advice Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry took, or, indeed, of Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps I am fortunate that I have been able to publish the report so relatively early in my stewardship of the Department. I have sympathy with my predecessors, who were constrained by the need to make sure that the prosecuting authorities were content. I received that clearance only last week. Nowhere in the report have I seen any criticism of the conduct of the Director General of Fair Trading, my predecessor or junior Ministers in the Department ever since the beginning of the affair.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): By lying and cheating, the Fayed brothers fooled the Office of Fair Trading, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Department of Trade and Industry. Why are they to be allowed to remain in full possession of the assets that they have dishonestly acquired and in the process thumb their noses at the Government?

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman should put that question to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, who is responsible for prosecutions.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the report has opened a can of worms which exposes the serious shortcomings of investor protection and the enforcement of company law? Why is it not serious fraud to lie about exactly who is taking over whom? With regard to directors ceasing to be directors, if the criticisms in the report do not amount to sufficient justification, surely that makes a mockery of company law which imposes those obligations on directors. Instead of the old adage and reliance on "My word is my bond", we probably need tougher city regulation, tighter legal enforcement of standards of disclosure and some

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

divestment. Rather than taking people off the board and allowing ownership to be retained, we should make it hurt where it really hurts, which is in the ownership of the company.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend, for whom I have the greatest respect, is as astute at spotting a can of worms as anybody, and I shall rely on him coming to a decision on the report. He will forgive me if I remain neutral in my comments on what he has said [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I have already said that the DPP and the director of the Serious Fraud Office are responsible for deciding whether to take criminal prosecutions. They have concluded not to do so. I cannot go beyond my powers. There are some lessons for some authorities, particularly in the City, which I hope they will learn from studying the report. Many of them received it only this morning and we shall await whatever they decide to say or do in due course.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The Secretary of State failed to reply to the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). Can he tell us why the Attorney-General has not bothered to come to the House today for the statement? Is that not part of the casual way in which the Government treat the whole matter? Will the Attorney-General come along at some stage to answer the question put a few minutes ago?

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman is skilled and experienced in this House, but perhaps he has not noticed that my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General is on the Treasury Bench. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is available to answer questions in this House at his appointed time. Any hon. Member who wishes can put questions to him either orally or in writing.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Although advisory organisations to the House of Fraser are subject to outside regulatory bodies, is it not in effect the case that my right hon. Friend is the regulatory body that controls the behaviour of company directors? Does he appreciate that many of us inside and probably far more outside the House are astonished that he will not take action to disbar those directors of House of Fraser who have been so seriously criticised in the report?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot add to what I have said about that matter. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I have judged it not to be in the public interests for a variety of reasons after considering carefully all the available evidence.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not true that chapter 25 of the report reveals that non-corporate offerers are not required under the takeover panel code to provide information about their financial background? *[Interruption.]* That is what it says in the report. If the argument is about the takeover of Harrods, who is the greater villain: Muhammad Ali—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. An understandable mistake.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the greater villian Mr. Al-Fayed, who has clearly been economical with the truth about his background—indeed, something which many international business men have practised over the years—or Mr. "Tiny" Rowland, who was the subject of a report in the late 1970s which led Treasury counsel to the Department of Trade and Industry to say that he should be prosecuted on four counts, including larceny under the Theft Act 1968, the exchange control legislation and the Southern Rhodesia (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1968? Is is not true that Mr. Rowland repeatedly committed offences, yet today tries to convince the British people that he should have been given the right to control and buy Harrods? Clearly justice may not appear to have been done, but to some extent it may have been done.

Mr. Ridley: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman on his slight slip of the tongue, but I do not think that anyone would believe that the events that we are talking about are particularly heavyweight. I agree with what he says about non-corporate purchasers—that is in the report.

It is for right hon. and hon. Members to form their own views on the account of events in the report. The report has performed an important function in giving the most information possible about what happened. What the hon. Gentleman has said shows that it is possible to form two judgments about the matter.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the investigation under section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985 was pursuant to a public general Act and that, therefore, if any person

"knowingly and wilfully makes . . . a statement false in a material particular"

even though not on oath, that person has committed perjury under section 5(c) of the Perjury Act 1911? That Act is still in force and was in force throughout the proceedings.

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that my hon. Friend is correct in saying that it is a criminal act to make false statements either to DTI inspectors or to any officer of the law.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that we have an important debate to follow. I shall take three more questions from either side of the House, then we must move on.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will understand the Secretary of State saying that the matter of prosecution for fraud is for his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. What the House does not understand, however, is what conceivable matters of public interest prevent the Secretary of State from exercising his own statutory obligations to decide whether the Al-Fayed brothers are fit and proper persons to be directors of that major company.

Mr. Ridley: I have already given an answer to that question, and I repeat that there are no outside shareholders of the House of Fraser company. If anyone wanted to appoint the persons concerned to his board, he would have available to him the contents of the report before deciding to do so. That report represents protection for shareholders in the future, but I repeat that there are no outside shareholders at present.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a deep sense of frustration on the Conservative Benches that these crooks should be allowed to get away with it? Does he not realise that the Al-Fayeds control assets in a public company and that, from that position, they will be able to acquire other

assets in this country? Is he also aware that we do not feel that these people should be in this country any more? They have obviously perjured themselves about their backgrounds and they should be deported as undesirable aliens. We do not want them here; they are crooks.

Mr. Ridley: The question of prosecution is not one for me. I cannot comment on my hon. Friend's views about immigration policy and deportation. That is not for me but for the Home Secretary.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that he does the House no favours in his replies by falling back continually on the defence that this is a matter for the learned Attorney-General? The right hon. and learned Gentleman is not here to make a second statement so that both sides of the House may question him about the reasons for his decision.

The Secretary of State should appreciate that the decision on this matter will be viewed differently outside the House from the apparent way in which he views it. The right hon. Gentleman has had no support from his Back Benchers. Outside the House, people who are pursued for social security frauds with all the vigour of the law will see that, yet again, there is one law for the rich and another for the poor; or, in the words of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), that this is the unacceptable face of capitalism.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must form his own view about those matters, but I would not advise him to use the word "fraud" outside the House, because that is a matter which should be decided by the prosecuting authorities. I cannot answer for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on publishing the report, the contents of which more than justify the almost obsessive campaign by a company chaired by one of our former colleagues. Is not my right hon. Friend's major problem today the fact that most of the doors to possible action on the content of the report were locked before he arrived at the Department, in particular the reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? However, can he at least say that, as Harrods bank deals with the general public, it would be quite offensive to the public if the Bank of England continued to authorise that bank? A bank should be authorised on the basis of its directors being fit and proper persons. I fully appreciate that there is not much that the Secretary of State can do now because the doors have already been locked, but will he at least ensure that Harrods bank no longer has the dignity of being authorised by the Bank of England?

Mr. Ridley: That is a matter for the Bank of England, which regulates bankers and has the power to decide whether the directors of any bank are fit and proper persons to control it. My hon. Friend should direct his question to the Bank of England.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney South and Shoreditch): How is it that honest merchant bankers Kleinwort Benson could conspire with Herbert Smith and Co., a firm of solicitors of the highest integrity, and the Al-Fayed brothers, legendary seekers after the truth, to commit a massive fraud on the British Government when the person charged with sifting the evidence was none other than the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who is renowned for his judgment of character, financial acumen and genius for taking the right decisions? What political debts were being repaid when that episode in sleaze and slime took place?

Mr. Ridley: I am always grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his generous, full-hearted and jovial approach to these matters, but no question for me to answer arises from what he has said.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I welcome the publication of the report at last, but may I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to chapter 25, dealing with lessons to be learned, in which it says:

"the arrangements for deciding . . . a controversial bid put intolerable strain on the OFT and the DTI who found themselves obliged to perform a role for which they were not equipped"?

Who will guard the public against these crooks? Could not the whole affair have been torpedoed at the start by getting Kleinwort Benson to justify its claim that the Al-Fayeds had got the money when they had not?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend touches on a matter for which I should pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who changed the criteria for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of mergers and acquisitions so that the prime consideration was one of competition rather than wider matters, which were the cause of the original reference of this matter to the MMC. That important and welcome change will make the job of the director general much easier and will not have got the House involved in such matters, which have nothing to do with competition.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Later.

Bristol Council House (Disturbances)

4.3 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the violence against the police and arrests at Bristol council house last night."

You, Mr. Speaker, and the whole House will be only too well aware that the events in Bristol last night were the worst example of a series of attacks on council houses that took place around the country, in Birmingham, Reading, Bristol and Exeter, all of which appear to have been co-ordinated by certain individuals who are involved in the anti-poll tax union. The matter is important and specific because five police were injured last night, one of them quite seriously by being knocked unconscious. Another was kicked and stamped on, and another, in Bristol, was electrocuted and treated for shock. There appears to be a group of people moving across the country, organising these demonstrations on behalf of the Left wing of the Labour movement.

In Bristol, these actions were co-ordinated by a former Labour councillor and were supported by two other members of the Labour group on the city council.

Surely this House needs to give urgent consideration to this matter, not only to protect the police force, which acted brilliantly in Bristol, but also to protect councillors and members of the public who have the right to attend meetings and object in a peaceful manner. The demonstrators in Bristol and in other parts of the country last night were not locals or pensioners; they were part of an organised mob. That is why I believe that we should urgently discuss this issue.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the violence against the police and arrests at Bristol council house last night."

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said about this matter, but, as he knows, I have to decide whether to give it precedence over the business set down for today and tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

I shall now take a point of order of which I have been notified.

Points of Order

4.7 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have given you notice of this matter, but I realise that it is complex and that you may not yet have had the opportunity to take advice and to come to a conclusion on it.

Last night the Secretary of State for Energy placed in the Library of the House a departmental minute which claims to give him the authority to accept liabilities for costs incurred by Nuclear Electric, up to a limit of £2,500 million. Under the Electricity Act 1989, any such guarantee in excess of £1,000 million cannot be given unless an order is laid before the House, debated and agreed. That was promised by the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor in a statement in July last year.

Can you, Mr. Speaker, confirm that the back-door method employed by the Secretary of State does not validate any guarantee that he may try to give in excess of £1,000 million? Can you also confirm that, in view of the rules of the House and the objections that we lodged last night and which appear on today's Order Paper, the Secretary of State's proper course of action is to come clean, to lay an order, and come to the House to justify this new nuclear levy on taxpayers which he proposes on top of the nuclear levy that he has already imposed on electricity users?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having given me some notice of this matter, because I have been able to look into it briefly, although I have not had time to go into it fully, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the tabling of an objection to the departmental minute has the effect of requiring that objection to be considered by the Department. That procedure is fully described in page 215 of "Erskine May".

As to the need for an affirmative resolution, that is a legal matter calling for an interpretation of the law, but I understand that the departmental minute contains the proviso that it is subject to parliamentary approval of the provision of the necessary funds being obtained.

I shall inquire further into what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have had before us a report of 750 pages containing details of the most squalid and disgraceful events that have happened in industry and commerce for many years——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Member was not called on the statement, but he was not alone. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, it is very much a point of order for you. We often have an hour on statements, and yet on an issue of the greatest importance to the integrity of this country we are allowed only half an hour. Why can you not give us another half-hour?

Mr. Speaker: I shall give the hon. Gentleman the reason. I have the difficult task of balancing the obvious interests of Members in statements. Equally, I have to bear in mind the interests of hon. Members in important

debates that will follow. In the past, the hon. Gentleman has frequen.. complained that he has not been called in a debate.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: That is so.

Mr. Speaker: He confirms that. He should not now complain because he has not been called during a statement.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Bearing in mind that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry is currently engaged on an inquiry into investigations on City fraud and that two of my Conservative colleagues on that Committee were called, would it not have been appropriate for at least one of the Labour members of the Committee to have been called?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the whole House must accept that, when a matter is raised on the Floor of the House it gives hon. Members who are not members of the Select Committee an opportunity to comment about it.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have not raised a point of order before, and it is not in the least frivolous. I ask you to refer a very important matter to the Committee of Privileges because——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman has not raised a point of order before, I shall give him some advice. If it is a matter of privilege, he must write to me in the usual way.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. How does it come about that a statement on hill farming went on for one and a quarter hours, while on an issue of this kind we are closed down in about half an hour?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Heffer: I have not finished.

Mr. Speaker: I can help the hon. Gentleman on this matter. I have to strike a balance every day on the pressure from hon. Members to speak in subsequent debates. The hon. Gentleman is another hon. Member who frequently complains that he is not called in debate. It is very selfish to expect to be called on a statement when that would have the effect of denying his colleagues the opportunity to speak in a debate. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Heffer: I have never complained about not being called. I have complained, and will continue to complain, that you, Mr. Speaker, do not listen to Members who raise points of order but intervene before they have finished. Is it not about time that you listened to hon. Members making points of order before you move in and stop them? *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should understand that I am trying to protect their rights. If they do not understand that, they do not understand the first point about Parliament, which is that Back Benchers, as well as Front Benchers, have rights.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) and I are on the same side. We are both attempting to protect the rights of Back Benchers—he in his way, and I in mine. I hope that the House will judge that, today, I have made the right decision.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This point of order comes from a Member who, to best of his recollection, has never complained about not having been called in debate. While appreciating fully the difficulties that you have explained, and accepting fully your right to make these choices, may I ask whether you agree that, in this case, the difficulty is not only the fact that, because of the pressure of other business, the time allocated is short, but also the fact that this is a massive report of extreme complexity? It contains some very damning conclusions in respect of the acquirers of the House of Fraser and of Harrods and comes on the back of the assertion by the Secretary of State that he did not wish to use any of his considerable powers of intervention in the matter. In addition, there has been no indication that a debate will be arranged, either at the request of the Opposition or by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Speaker: That is a valid point. It is another judgment that the Chair has to take into account. This is a very complicated matter. It stands to reason that hon. Members have not had an opportunity to read the report and, therefore, are not in a position fully to formulate their questions. I think that it was right to have a preliminary look at the report today, with a view to returning to it at a later stage. I have no knowledge of a debate, but the hon. Gentleman may certainly raise the matter with the Leader of the House tomorrow.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that in situations like this you have a very difficult job. Would it not be of some assistance to you if we were to look at the possibility of having a fixed time allocated for statements—whether half an hour or one hour? We should then know exactly where we were. You, Sir, have said that we may return to this matter, but there is no guarantee that we shall ever be able to do so. In the light of the pressure from Members who wanted to intervene in the course of this very important statement, it is quite clear that it would have been much better to have an extended time for questions on it than to spend the next six hours talking about something on which many of us think we should not spend so much time.

Mr. Speaker: That is the hon. Gentleman's personal judgment; it may not be shared by everyone.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On 24 January as reported at column 894 of the *Official Report*, I raised with you, Sir, on a point of order, the fact that the Isle of Wight Labour party had denounced the campaign against the community charge as having been inspired by the Militant Tendency. In view of the fact that the genie is now out of the bottle, with considerable disruption throughout the country, would it not have behoved the Leader of the Opposition to denounce the whole campaign much earlier?

Mr. Speaker: That does not concern order in the Chamber. I think we should move on.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why?

Mr. Speaker: Very well; I shall take a point from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is a very helpful former chairman of an important body.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important report of 750 pages—a £600 million cover-up. If we do not want the Chair to be involved in that cover-up, and if we are to spend six hours debating somebody picking up £50,000 from the Saudi Arabians, we should have more than half an hour to debate the report.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make accusations of that kind, he should do so in the debate later today.

Mr. Heffer: You said, Mr. Speaker, that I rose in relation to the statement. I never moved from my seat. I never made any move to ask a question. I think that you should withdraw your statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If I made a mistake, I apologise unreservedly to the hon. Gentleman.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 23 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Robert Adley.
Mr. John Bowis.
Mr. Charles Wardle.

Blasphemy (No. 2)

4.19 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish the offence of blasphemy and certain other common law offences; and for connected purposes.

Disagreement about religion has a long and extremely dismal history. Michelangelo's religious art in the Sistine chapel, when he painted frescoes for one pope, was painted out after his death on the orders of another incumbent in that office. In the 15th century, Joan of Arc was burnt at Rouen. John Huss was burned as a heretic in Bohemia —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members who are not remaining in the Chamber, especially those who are now standing below the Gangway, should leave quietly.

Mr. Cryer: In the 16th century, much of Europe was consumed by Catholics and Protestants killing one another in the name of righteousness. Protestants killed other Protestants and both Protestants and Catholics killed more extreme dissenters such as Anabaptists.

Galileo was imprisoned in 1633 and forced to repent his view that the world was round. Spinoza, one of the great philosophers, was expelled from the Jewish congregation and condemned by both Catholics and Protestants. In 1697, the Blasphemy Act was passed and men and women suffered under it until the 1960s.

George Holyoake was imprisoned for six months at Cheltenham for blasphemy in the 1830s, for preferring concern for the economic well-being of humanity to duty to God. After serving his six months, Holyoake went on to found the London Secular Society and to campaign about the case of Thomas Pooley in 1857. Pooley, who was mentally disturbed, had written "Jesus Christ" and "T. Pooley" on a clergyman's gate. Mr. Justice Coleridge allowed the conviction on the ground that the words must be insulting in some way. Charles Bradlaugh was denied his seat in this place on several occasions because of his lack of religious views.

As recently as 1911, John W. Gott of Bradford was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for publishing satirical verses in his "Rib-Tickler" or "Questions for Parsons". Gott continued an increasingly bitter campaign to repeal the laws that were used to curb the public views of free thinkers.

In 1922, at the Old Bailey, Gott was sentenced to nine months' hard labour for blasphemy. Despite medical evidence that he was seriously ill, he was forced to serve the full sentence. He died shortly after his release in 1922. Another death on the scaffold of intolerance.

Gott's tradition was taken up in Bradford by a well-known orator, Joe Corina. As society became more tolerant, it was possible on a Sunday evening on Broadway in Bradford to hear the secularists speaking yards away from an advocate of the Catholic Truth Society. I knew and admired both speakers. That spirit of tolerance and exchange of ideas must be preserved, and my Bill will help to do that.

Following the recommendation of the Law Commission in 1966 that the statute of 1697 should be repealed, the Criminal Law Act 1967 implemented the recommendation. There remains, however, the common law criminal offence. That offence is one of strict liability,

in that it requires no evidence of intention to blaspheme. It provides only that the language should be shocking and insulting. Hence, evidence is not allowed about the defendant's belief and purpose, contrary to the general principles of our law. For example, a deeply religious person cannot bring evidence to the court of his religious conviction.

The Law Commission in 1985 recommended unanimously that the common law offence should be repealed. Two out of seven said that a new offence should be created. All seven agreed that the law of blasphemy should be repealed. Since that report, the Public Order Act 1986 created a new offence. Under section 5(1), a person will be guilty if he

> "(a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or
> (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting,
> within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby."

So that dealt with the gap that a minority on the Law Commission suggested should be plugged and will surely cover any serious circumstance where disputes occur in the ordinary course of events.

My Bill follows precisely the draft Bill provided by the Law Commission in its 1985 report. It consists of three clauses. Clause 1 would abolish the offences in common law whose abolition was recommended in the report. Clause 1(a) would abolish the offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel. Clause 1(b) and (c) would abolish the offences of disturbing divine worship or devotions, and striking a person in a church or churchyard. The clause refers to distinct offences, since there is some doubt, on the authorities, as to whether they exist. The most recent reported case dates from the mid-18th century. Of course, the Public Order Act 1986 created a new offence to cover any gap that might arise.

Clause 2 would repeal references to the common law offence of blasphemous libel in the Criminal Libel Act 1819 and to blasphemous matters in section 3 of the Law of Libel Amendment Act 1888, which confers privilege on newspaper reports of court proceedings, provided the matter is not blasphemous or indecent.

Clause 3 provides for the short title and extent of the Bill. No commencement date is specified, which means that, if and when the Bill was enacted, it would come into force on receiving Royal Assent.

I hope that the Bill is approved. It would end uncertainty and unfairness, and place all faiths on an equal basis. It would emphasise tolerance in society. I do not accept that any faith should impose its views on the rest of society. A faith can, and indeed does, persuade and urge followers not to see a film or read a book, but, for example, groups within the Muslim faith cannot impose censorship on the rest of the nation through the withdrawal of "Satanic Verses". People have a right to read a book, in paperback or hardback form, provided it has been produced within the law.

Our general tolerance is seriously scarred by the fact that Salman Rushdie cannot argue his views in a spirit of tolerance. Death threats to him are intolerable. The placing of all faiths on an equal basis would be a demonstration of our determination that the mutual exchange and discussion of various ideas should take place free from imposition and threats.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Norman Buchan, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Mr. Clive Soley, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Martin Flannery and Mr. Eric S. Heffer.

BLASPHEMY (NO. 2)

Mr. Bob Cryer accordingly presented a Bill to abolish the offence of blasphemy and certain other common law offences; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 March and to be printed. [Bill 79.]

Members' Interests

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on Members' interests. Before we enter on the motions, it might be helpful to the House if I describe the procedure that is to be followed.

The Leader of the House moves first the formal motion that the report of the Select Committee be now considered, in order to enable the hon. Member whose conduct is in question to address the House first. It has been our custom that, when the hon. Member has concluded his speech he withdraws from the Chamber, but on the most recent occasion the House decided that the hon. Members concerned could remain to hear the debate if they so wished. Therefore, I take it that that is the will of the House on this occasion.

Secondly, I remind the House that it is our custom that such speeches should be heard in silence and without interruption. Thereafter, when the formal motion has been disposed of, I propose to call the Leader of the House to move and to speak to the substantive motion in his name.

There will then follow a joint debate on that motion and on the amendments to it, and on motion 2 on the Order Paper and the amendment that I have selected to that, which is amendment (b). On the first motion I have selected all the amendments—amendments (a) to (d) inclusive.

At the conclusion of the debate, I will call the Members to move their amendments to the first motion formally so that the House may decide upon them. I shall then put the main question before moving on to amendment (b) to the second motion and then to that main question.

Ordered,

That the Report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests (HC 135) be now considered.—*[Sir Geoffrey Howe.]*

4.31 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I rise to apologise most sincerely both to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House.

Very considerable pressures have been brought upon me to discuss the Select Committee's report publicly before this debate. I have resisted that, because I felt that the correct place for me to speak was to this House, which I now do.

There was also an option open to me to make an earlier personal statement. I rejected that lest it seem like an attempt on my part to pre-empt the debate.

There has been considerable media coverage of this case. In coming to a judgment, I ask the House to put out of its mind that media coverage, much of it sensationalised and, in the light of the Select Committee's findings, simply untrue.

I now recognise that, some seven to eight years ago, I failed to register properly all my interests. Since first being elected to Parliament some 11 years ago, I have tried always to comply with the rules of the House as I understood them and properly to declare my interests.

Whenever I have spoken in debates I have also sought to declare relevant interests. I have, on occasions, refrained from voting, as on the Barclays Bank Bill in 1984, when I felt that there was potential conflict with the financial interests that I had.

I ask the House to consider the Select Committee's report against that background.

I cannot honestly say to the House that I am happy with the investigation procedure but, subject to that, I turn to the two complaints that the Select Committee upheld and upon which it recommended further action.

First, there is the matter of the Saudi Arabian monetary agency. Some eight years ago my company, Falcon, in which I had declared an interest as a director, had a contract with the Saudi agency. That contract did not involve parliamentary lobbying of any kind. I did not declare that contract, because the work did not involve Parliament in any way whatever.

As the House will know, there is no general obligation to disclose the names of clients. Having already declared an interest in my Falcon company, it did not occur to me that rule 13(7) applied to sums received in the commercial business of my company.

Since this matter arose, I have discovered that I am not alone in that interpretation. Furthermore, the Committee seems to have accepted this uncertainty in recommending that rule 13(7) now be clarified.

Having stated how I interpreted the rules, I naturally accept entirely the Committee's interpretation, and I apologise for failing to disclose that interest.

The Committee has also determined that I should have declared the client relationship with the Saudi agency because of the question that I asked of the Prime Minister in 1982. As the House will know, I could not possibly have known that I would be called to ask the question, because it was only a supplementary question. Furthermore, the Committee accepts that I was not asked to put that question. It has also accepted that the question made no difference to my fee. I am grateful for those acceptances.

The reason why I asked the question, the answer to which was, of course, predictable, was that I wanted, as most other hon. Members would want, to encourage inward investment into the United Kingdom.

Again, I accept the judgment of the Committee and I apologise sincerely for the omission.

The second matter concerns Selco East and Mr. Charles Chidiac. Again, these events related back approximately eight years. I must tell the House that I have never had any kind of contractual or financial relationship with Mr. Charles Chidiac. That fact was confirmed by Mr. Chidiac himself. Then, as now—and in common, I imagine, with hon. Members on both sides of the House—I sought to back British companies which were facing intense foreign competition. I had no financial interest in so doing and therefore did not consider that I had an interest to declare.

My company, Falcon, did have a consultancy agreement with Selco East, London. Under that agreement, my company, in which I had declared my directorship, was paid £200 a month for some nine months. It was for general financial advice work and banking introductions. It did not involve any parliamentary lobbying. The contract had nothing to do with my actions on behalf of British companies.

Without the relationship between Mr. Charles Chidiac and Selco East, London, there would have been no requirement to declare the consultancy agreement. However, looking at it now, I understand why the Committee found that the relationship between Mr. Charles Chidiac and the owners of Selco East, London was so close that the consultancy agreement with my company should have been declared.

I therefore accept the Committee's judgment concerning that and, again, I apologise.

I wish to emphasise that my failure to disclose those interests was to a misunderstanding of the rules, which no-one can fairly say are wholly clear. Indeed, a motion is now before the House inviting the Select Committee to study and report further on the definition of outside interests.

I had no financial reason for failing to declare those interests and I have never intentionally misled the House.

I say to the House that I am truly sorry for my mistakes, for the misery that I have caused to my family and for the embarrassment that I have brought to the House and to my constituency.

4.38 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That this House

(i) agrees with the Report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests (HC 135); and

(ii) endorses the findings of the Committee in respect of the specific allegations against the honourable Member for Winchester and accordingly suspends him from the service of this House for a period of 20 sitting days and suspends his salary as a Member for that period.

The House will have listened, as I have, to the substantial statement made by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), to his explanation and to his personal and repeated apologies with considerable personal sadness and with a deep sense of the seriousness of this occasion.

It now falls to me to undertake the painful burden of launching this difficult and important debate. The fact that the motions stand in my name alone indicates the unusual nature of the occasion. These are matters for consideration by the House as a whole, for this is pre-eminently not an occasion that any of us would wish to approach in a partisan spirit. It is an occasion for the House as a whole to search—as it has always tried to do, on those fortunately infrequent occasions in the past when we have been obliged to consider such matters—for reasoned conclusions and to consider what action, if any, to take in respect of alleged misconduct by one of our number. It is an occasion on which the House has to try to act in a similar non-partisan way. I certainly appear today not in any sense as a member of the Administration but as Leader of the House of Commons.

In formulating the motions that I have laid before the House I have endeavoured, after wide consultations on all sides, to identify and to express the conclusions that I judge will best represent the opinion of the House as a whole.

As Leader of the House I have tried to ensure, as best I may, that just as the subject of debate is not one which will divide the House on party lines, so the motions that I move may also attract the widest support, and it is in that spirit that I have approached my task.

The debate today is of importance to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. That goes without saying—and his statement a moment ago emphasises just how important—but the debate is also important for the maintenance of the standards that we all strive to uphold in the House. I hope that we may be able to use this melancholy occasion positively to help in the necessarily intermittent process of defining more clearly how those standards apply in specific circumstances, and how the House should set about upholding them when they are called into question.

It is to that continuing task that my second substantive motion is directed. In that motion I suggest that the House may well wish to invite the Select Committee on Members' Interests to give further consideration to questions of procedure as well as of substance, which were touched upon in its report.

The report of the Select Committee is at the heart of today's proceedings. On behalf of the House I pay tribute to the work of the Select Committee under the skilful and sensitive chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson-Smith).

The absolute irrelevance of any kind of partisan approach to today's debate is reinforced by the way in which in all its findings, the Select Committee was able to reach unanimous conclusions, and that is a most important point. Both in its conclusions about the allegations concerning the conduct of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, and in its observations on the operations of the Register of Members' Interests, and on other more general topics, the Committee was in complete agreement. That fact must surely give added weight to its conclusions.

On that basis, the first substantive motion in my name today invites the House to endorse the conclusion reached by the Select Committee about the alleged misconduct of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. Let me remind the House briefly of those allegations. The Committee grouped the complaints made against my hon. Friend under five headings. It records its findings on 10 separate counts. Of those 10, it finds no substance in five, it finds some substance in three but recommends that no action should be taken by the House, and in respect of two complaints against my hon. Friend the Committee found that he was at fault and recommended that the House consider action.

First, in paragraph 65 of the report, the Committee refers to my hon. Friend's failure to declare his interest in payment from an agency of a foreign Government—Saudi Arabia—of a little more than $88,000. The Committee found, as my hon. Friend has acknowledged, that he should have declared both the client relationship and the foreign payment.

Secondly, in paragraph 101, the Committee deals with my hon. Friend's failure to register his interest in a Lebanese company, while lobbying Ministers and officials on its and its clients' behalf, although a payment of £1,600 out of a proposed retainer of £2,600 a year was made to him. The Committee found it to be beyond reasonable doubt that my hon. Friend had a client relationship which influenced his parliamentary actions and conduct as a Member, and which should have been declared and registered.

It would be quite wrong and unfair to my hon. Friend if, by focusing on those two charges, we gave the impression that the Committee had upheld all the allegations made against him. It did not. However, the Committee's positive findings are, in its chosen language, serious matters, and we cannot belittle their importance.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

The second part of my motion invites the House to decide what action, if any, should be taken to signal our view about the seriousness of that misconduct. I shall have more to say about that crucial question in the last part of my speech.

I will try to make clear my own view of the role of the House today. Judicial metaphors may be misleading. We are certainly not here to try my hon. Friend. We are not a court of law. A better analogy, in my view, is that of a disciplinary committee of one of the professions, although like all analogies it does not correspond at all points. One feature that our procedure has in common with professional and other disciplinary bodies is that it has provoked complaint and criticism from the person who has been the subject of proceedings—as it has today from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If we are not a court of law, could we at least be clear whether the Lord President thinks that the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) has done anything legally wrong? I ask that question against the background of being had up by the Select Committee in 1967 with no capacity for legal defence in matters which subsequently turned out to be very different from how they looked at the time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not respond too frequently to interventions of that kind. It is hard enough to deal with one case at a time.

As I was about to say, certain criticisms can legitimately be made of the proceedings and my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester has touched upon them.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Leader of the House saying that the actions of the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) were unlawful?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The answer to that is self-evident from the report of the Select Committee. Whether or not there is any legal offence involved, my hon. Friend has not been charged with a legal offence. He has committed errors which in the opinion of the Committee deserve to be regarded as serious and to be subject to action by the House. The matter stands within its own framework. Complaints are understandable.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Leader of the House be fair? He was asked a simple question by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on the question of legality. Will he make it clear that the Committee did not find illegality? Therefore, he should answer my hon. Friend comprehensively. We did not so find. Can the right hon. and and learned Gentleman not say that from the Dispatch Box?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have already said, the Committee was not concerned with legality or illegality. It was concerned with investigating what had taken place and upholding the standards that the House seeks to set for itself and its Members. As I said a moment ago, this is not a court of law and we are concerned not with questions of legality but with the way in which we uphold the standards expected of hon. Members and of the House.

I was going on to say that the complaints made by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester are understandable. It is not to be expected in cases of this kind that the procedures should closely follow those of courts of law. Of course, we should strive to achieve the principles of natural justice. It is clear from the patient way in which the Select Committee did its work that it endeavoured to do just that.

As an example, I draw attention to paragraph 20 of the report in which the Committee takes care to arrange for the exchange and cross-exchange of evidence.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): If we are not a court of law but a disciplinary committee, and the Leader of the House has spoken of the concept of natural justice, will my right hon. and learned Friend advise the House whether that concept of natural justice—one in which charges are laid, witnesses are allowed to be called, representation is available and nobody is ju dex in sua re, or lays charges or proposes sentences before the accused has been heard—has been upheld in this case?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. and learned Friend will have an opportunity to make his points later. If the House will allow me to proceed, I am doing my best to make concessions in the direction offered by my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No doubt my other hon. and learned Friend will do the same if I gave way, but I hope that he will forgive me if I do not do so.

The position is very similar to that which emerged when the report of an earlier Select Committee was considered by the House in 1977, following the so-called Poulson affair. At least two distinguished legal members of that Committee expressed anxiety then about the procedures being followed—I refer to the former hon. and learned Members for Hendon, South and for Montgomery, now Lord Thomas of Gwydir and Lord Hooson.

Lord Thomas said:

"I felt that the Select Committee was a judicial body that seemed wholly alien to my professional experience and nurturing. But the House was concerned with the standards it is entitled to expect from its Members. Decisions on the standards of conduct of hon. Members can never be handed over to an outside body. Therefore, the Select Committee, with all its apparent imperfections as a judicial body, was necessary and inevitable in this case."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1977; Vol. 936, c. 395-96.]

We have already heard those words echoed in today's debate, and no doubt they will be echoed again.

It is for that very reason that the second motion in my name specifically invites the Select Committee to give further consideration to procedures which might be followed in future cases of this kind. It is also right for us to recall wider issues raised by the Select Committee's report concerning the operation of the system for registering Members' interests. There are a number of points of substance, as well as of procedure, that the House might think it appropriate for the Select Committee to be asked to review further in the light of today's debate. Those, too, are addressed in the second substantive motion in my name, as indeed they are in the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Against that background, I think that, in relation to the specific accusations made against my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, the House will wish to proceed on the basis of the conclusions recorded by the Select Committee. I do not consider it any part of our function today to review those findings in detail. The Select Committee, which was established by the House of

Commons in 1975 for the express purpose of reviewing breaches of the rules that we had established on the disclosure of Members' interests, has carried out that task in accordance with its terms of reference. It would therefore be otiose, and discourteous to the Committee, if we sought to repeat on the Floor of the House, in a condensed and distorted form, the Committee's careful deliberations over many months. The House is required to decide what action should be taken in the light of the Committee's findings.

To return to the central feature of the matter, we in the House have a duty to uphold our own standards. No one outside the House can or will do that for us—we must do it ourselves, and we must do it without fear or favour. Of course we must take account of opinion outside the House, but we must not allow ourselves to be overborne or carried away by wild or irresponsible criticism from any quarter. We must perform our task rigorously, paying due attention to the facts of the case as investigated by the Select Committee and reported to us.

We must not, for example, be swayed by some feeling that we are all, as it were, members of the same club and owe some kind of primary allegiance to each other. Of course we must seek to act justly when dealing with our colleagues in such matters, but as we form our judgment in this case I suggest that we should also be mindful of the advice offered to the House, again in 1977, by Lord Strauss —better known to us in the House as George Strauss, former right hon. Member for Vauxhall and Chairman of the Select Committee which reported on the earlier case. He said:

"This is a national affair and the national aspect of it is that there must remain in the mind of the whole public a high esteem for this body, because it is the emblem of democracy in this country".—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1977; Vol. 936, c. 364.]

We can all say, "Hear, hear," to that. The strength and authority of the House of Commons rests upon the respect of the people. If that respect is endangered, much greater damage may follow. That is the fundamental background against which we must remind ourselves why we are so deeply concerned by the topic of today's debate.

Anyone who in the last couple of weeks has read again, as I have, the reports of debates in the House in 1974 and 1975 when the House first resolved that there should be a compulsory Register of Members' interests and a Select Committee to oversee it, will certainly have been struck by two points. First, there was widespread agreement that it was not wrong in principle for hon. Members to have outside interests. Coming to the House as we do from a wide variety of backgrounds, we bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to our duties, whether on the Back or the Front Benches, and that is important.

As one hon. Member said in 1974,

"God forbid that we ever get 635 full-time Members of this House. It would be a political monastery . . . This place benefits greatly from people with outside financial interests." —[*Official Report*, 22 May 1974; Vol. 874, c. 432.]

[Interruption.] The House may be surprised to learn that that was the view of our former colleague, Willie Hamilton, then hon. Member for Fife, Central. I appreciate that that view is not universally shared, as is clear from the sedentary interventions, but it remains my own view. I believe that it is important for the House not to become a House without windows, always looking in on itself and cut off from the experiences of the real world. That is the view which underlay and still underlies the establishment and operation of the Register of Members' Interests, but there is a powerful and crucial corollary to that essentially libertarian belief.

Again, the 1974 and 1975 debates reveal a broad and deep consensus that we must be acutely concerned not only with the substance of improper conduct and the risk of undue influence being brought to bear on an hon. Member, but with the mere appearance of that. Hon. Members must not only act honourably—we must be seen to act honourably. We must be—and be seen to be—above suspicion. That means that, both individually and collectively, we all need to pay careful and continuous attention to the definitions and procedures which have been established by the House to guide us in the handling and disclosure of outside interests.

Where those definitions or procedures appear to need further refinement or clarification—as my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester suggested earlier and, indeed, as the Select Committee itself acknowledges—we should certainly pursue the matter. We should always bear in mind, however, that a full and perfect system—one which offers precision in advance of every case—simply cannot be designed; that is impossible.

It was widely recognised in the debates of 15 years ago that there was, and would always remain, an element of subjective judgment for each individual Member. Against the background of our unique position in the House—responsible as we are for maintaining our own standards, but each of us accountable to the electorate in all that we do—it is inescapable and entirely right that there must be that scope for individual judgment of what is or is not appropriate for disclosure.

So it is that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, as he has told the House, has exercised his judgment and discretion in each of the relationships and transactions examined by the Select Committee. It is in relation to two aspects of that conduct that, as I have explained, the Committee has expressed a clearly critical view. Paragraph 103 of the report recommends the House to

"decide an early date what action it proposes to take in the light of the serious nature of those of our findings which uphold the complaints against Mr. Browne."

Today my hon. Friend has accepted the findings of error recorded by the Committee, and has apologised for those errors.

The first substantive motion standing in my name invites the House, after crucial—even understandably reluctant—consideration, to endorse the Committee's judgment. For my part, I have reached that conclusion, with personal regret but without any doubt, for the following reasons. I will try to put them simply.

Membership of the House of Commons is a great privilege, as we all acknowledge, and a privilege which carries with it great responsibilities. One of those responsibilities is to ensure that any personal, financial or other interest is so managed and so disclosed that it is never in conflict, or perceived to be in conflict, with the fundamental obligations and responsibilities of a Member of this House It is in my opinion clear, as it was to the Select Committee, that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester did not succeed in fulfilling that obligation.

Some may think that my hon. Friend deliberately hid his interests. Others, more charitably, having heard his speech, may think that it was no more than a misjudgment, if not an oversight. Either way, in my view, it must be the

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

case that my hon. Friend's acts and omissions did not measure up to his responsibilities. Today he has acknowledged that judgment and apologised in that respect.

Finally, I come to consider what is probably the most difficult question—that of penalty or reproach. Should the House proceed to impose a penalty upon my hon. Friend or require him in some way to be reprimanded or rebuked? If so, in what form or at what level should that be set? Some hon. Members, I know, believe—and will, I dare say, argue today—that talk of penalty is, in such circumstances, inappropriate. I do not share that view; nor do I believe that it accords with precedent.

That said, the range of options is very wide. Many of them are before the House, if not in my original motion, then in the amendments tabled by hon. Members on both sides of the House in the last couple of days. At one end of the scale, there is the possibility of simply taking note of the report. That barest of all options is not represented on today's Order Paper. At the other end of the scale is the possibility of expulsion. There is, I think I am right in saying, no precedent for that in recent times. Nor is it proposed by any hon. Member today.

If I may express a personal view on that, I can understand why. The House has increasingly, and in my judgment rightly, taken the view that the composition of the House, in personal as well as political terms, is not a matter for the House itself, but for the electorate. A Member's election to, and continued membership of, this House is a matter between him and his constituents.

The point was put with characteristic clarity in the 1977 debate by Lord Broxbourne, as he now is, better known in this House as my right hon. and learned Friend Sir Derek Walker-Smith:

> "Members . . . sit here by reason of the will and suffrage of their constituents. The House must be careful about pre-empting their choice or usurping their function. The sovereignty of Parliament is, indeed, a great principle, but it must not be exercised at the expense of the sovereignty of the people."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1977; Vol. 936, c. 418-9.]

Some would put suspension in the same class—as a penalty upon a Member's constituents as much as upon the Member himself, and so, up to a point, it is. However, it does not by any means debar the hon. Member from acting for his constituents outside the Chamber.

The suspension that I have proposed in my substantive motion would mean that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester would be debarred from the Chamber, but not from the precincts of the House. By definition, suspension is limited in duration. It is also reasonably well precedented. As many as 21 hon. Members have been suspended for periods of up to 20 days in the past 43 years. Most recently——

Mr. Dalyell: On what basis is the right hon. and learned Gentleman suddenly making the judgment that the hon. Member for Winchester is to be allowed inside the precincts of the House? When I am suspended, for reasons that are known, I am not allowed inside the precincts. What is the difference? Is saying bad things about the Prime Minister so much worse?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not studied the matter as closely as the hon. Gentleman in respect of his own situation. The advice that I have received is that the terms of this motion should not involve suspension beyond the circumstances that I have described. It may have been different in other cases.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to the point made by my admirable colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), when I was suspended—rather misguidedly—the House was deprived of my presence anywhere within the precincts.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will address the point that I have made. I am speaking on the basis of the advice that I have received. We shall listen to what is said as the debate proceeds.

More recently, on 20 April 1988, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) was suspended for 20 days. With that in mind, the options that are, in this respect, before the House range from, first, endorsement of the report of the Select Committee, without any penalty or reproach. An amendment to that effect stands in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) and for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Next in line comes the proposal of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield—that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester should be formally reprimanded by Mr. Speaker himself. Then comes my own proposal —a suspension for the normal maximum period of 20 days —the equivalent of a month.

Beyond that, the House will have seen that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and others, are proposing a period of suspension of as much as three months. Further than that, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and others are calling upon my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester to resign.

Many hon. Members will no doubt wish to listen to the whole debate before coming to a conclusion on this central question. No doubt they will wish, as indeed I shall, to take account of the points made in the personal statement of my hon. friend the Member for Winchester at the opening of this debate. He explained to the House the background of personal circumstances against which he acted, and he asked us to have in mind the way in which he described the specific errors of omission or commission on his part which the Select Committee has reviewed. The House will no doubt wish to do so.

I apologise for detaining the House for a little time. I hope that, at least to some extent, I have been able to suggest the way in which the House will wish to approach its task. It is to that end that I commend my motion, alongside the several amendments selected for consideration. It is now for the House to judge.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Chairman of the Select Committee, it may be for the convenience of the House if I draw attention to page 399 of "Erskine May", which states:

> "A Member suspended from the service of the House on a motion not made pursuant to Standing Order No. 43 is not excluded from the precincts of the House unless the order for his suspension expressly provides therefor."

5.6 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): On behalf of my colleagues who served on the Select Committee, I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House for tabling his motion, which invites the House to

agree with the Committee's report and endorse its findings. I am pleased to be able to acknowledge the apology of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and his acceptance of the report's findings. I am grateful to him for that.

It is not a pleasant duty to inquire into the personal affairs of a parliamentary colleague. None of the Committee enjoyed that task. I thank my colleagues who served on the Committee for their care, diligence and dedication in what turned out to be a long and protracted inquiry. Our deliberations were exhaustive but worth while because I have no doubt that the time that we took over those deliberations enabled us to produce a unanimous report.

All hon. Members are aware that such matters are House of Commons matters. They are not party matters. The Committee rightly examined the complaints in a non-partisan manner. In investigating such complaints, the Committee must work within clearly defined rules. Our opinions of those rules do not matter—we must work within them. I am referring to our consideration of the rules governing the declaration of Members' interests. I believe that they are common-sense rules—they were not drawn up by lawyers and are not to be interpreted by lawyers. They were drawn up by a Select Committee, appointed by the House for that special purpose, in the Session 1974-75. The Committee therefore has a clear duty placed upon it by Standing Order No. 128 to consider impartially complaints that are referred to it.

The procedure followed by the Committee was laid down by the Select Committee on Members' Interests in the 1974-75 Session and approved by the House in 1975. In respect of complaints, the Committee's terms of reference are narrow. We can consider specific complaints relating to registration and declaration of interests and no other matter. In short, we cannot go on any fishing expedition. Nor should we consider matters relating more generally to a Member's conduct. In that way, our task is substantially different from that of the Select Committee on the Conduct of Members set up after the Poulson affair. Therefore, our sole concern is whether the rules of the House have been disregarded or disobeyed within a narrow area.

The Committee adhered closely to those terms of reference in the inquiry. We hope that we made that clear to those who studied the report, in paragraph 8. I hope that the House understands why I do not wish to comment on the specific complaints or findings of the Committee and agrees that it would be inappropriate to revive now, on the Floor of the House, all the detailed discussions or to refer to all the notes of written evidence and, indeed, the oral evidence given during the debate.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the question put a few minutes ago by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir. N. Fairbairn), on the need to meet the obligations of natural justice to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), does the hon. Gentleman agree that the hon. Member for Winchester received a fair and impartial hearing from the Select Committee?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: It is the view of my Committee that we discharged our duty as the hon. Gentleman described. But I wish to make it clear that the House will judge whether we acquitted ourselves according to the standards of the House. That is why I do not wish to go into the reasons why we came to our conclusions and what we did. Many hon. Members have studied the matter closely and read the report, and it is they who will pronounce at the end of the day.

The House has the report, and I do not want to add to or subtract from it. The words in the report were carefully chosen after lengthy consideration. I pay tribute to the Clerk to the Committee for his patience and skill in drafting as well as his careful and methodical compilation of the evidence, which is voluminous.

As I said, I do not wish to add anything further to the report. Therefore, I hope that the House will not mind if I say no more about the matter but pass on to points that I hope will be useful when the House comes to consider not only how it should react to the report but what we should do in future.

The House may wonder why we did not make any specific recommendations in the light of our findings. We thought about it for some time. However, this is the first occasion since the procedure was established in 1975 when the Committee has had to make an adverse report on an hon. Member. Indeed, the complaints procedure as a whole has been little used. The register was set up amid some controversy. The House has never reviewed the register or outlined the importance that it places on compliance with the rules of registration. Therefore, the Committee had no yardstick by which to judge the appropriate penalty or, indeed, whether a penalty was appropriate.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Do I understand that, if my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) had declined to register any interests, the Committee could have found that he was not at fault?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: It would all depend on the nature of the complaint made to us.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Come on.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: It is not a question of "come on". I shall come on in my own way. If my hon. and learned Friend is referring to the case of a distinguished Member of the House who did not declare an interest, no complaint was lodged against him. The Committee considered the fact that the right hon. Member did not register. We reported it to the House twice and the House decided to take no further action. That is why I do not propose to go further and answer a hypothetical question.

After some discussion, we felt that we had little option but to leave the matter of a penalty to the decision of the House. Perhaps I may add some general reflections, as I have been Chairman of the Committee since 1979 and a member of it since 1975.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Supposing that 20 or 50 Members of the House decided that, as from the next occasion, they would not register, what would happen then?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: That is another hypothetical question. I think that the hon. Gentleman can guess what would happen.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that if someone brought a complaint against any of the 50 on the basis that they had an interest that was not declared or registered, the

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

Committee would have to consider the matter and, indeed, commence an inquiry on exactly the same basis? Failure to register does not somehow absolve one of responsibility.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I dealt with that question to a large extent in response to the previous intervention. As the hon. Gentleman, who was so useful to us on the Committee, will know, if 20 hon. Members do not register, we cannot take specific action to investigate unless we have a specific complaint alleging that there were interests to declare. In the case of the right hon. Member to whom I referred, no one alleged that he did not register an interest. Everyone knew that he did not have any interests to register. What we were cross about was that he did not even register a nil return. I hope that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is satisfied with that answer. If not, we can come back to the matter later.

I would not be Chairman and my colleagues would not be members of the Committee if we did not believe strongly in the principles on which the Register is based. Many hon. Members will agree that, when Members of the House speak, vote, write to Ministers or do anything related to their job as Member of Parliament, their conduct should be transparent. The Registration of a Member's interests is not a gross invasion of privacy or a challenge to a Member's honour. If the Member obtains financial benefit that relates in any way to his activity as a Member of Parliament, he owes it to his colleagues, the public, the Minister or the Departments involved to disclose his interests. His interests may not influence him in the least. Perhaps 99 per cent. of the time they do not. But it is both good sense and, I submit, good manners to make them known. The Register is there to help Members to do that and it supplements the long-standing tradition of the House that Members should declare any relevant interests when speaking in a debate.

The suspicion of unavowed motives can be extremely damaging to the House. It is damaging to the reputation of the House and of its Members. Therefore, omissions from the Register should be treated with seriousness. The Register in its present form has served the House well. However, Members' outside interests have continued to increase. I make no complaint about any hon. Member having an outside interest, but there is a suspicion in some quarters that Members of Parliament use their position as a basis on which to build business interests and that those interests are sometimes partly concealed by fairly bland entries in the Register. I believe that that has been much exaggerated and that the connections of many hon. Members with particular companies are often misrepresented and completely misunderstood. Nevertheless, if the Register is to serve the House effectively in the future, perhaps the time has come to examine its scope afresh.

The Select Committee would warmly welcome that opportunity. Subject to consultation with the Committee, I believe that the terms set out in my right hon. and learned Friend's motion would give us such an opportunity. The motion invites the Select Committee to study and report further on questions raised by our report. The study should relate to definitions of outside interests and their enforcement as well as to the procedures for raising complaints and their investigation, together with other questions that might arise. With the terms of this motion well in our mind, it would be right first to consider its implication in the context of lobbying.

Last year we embarked on an investigation into lobbying to fulfil our obligations to the House, which asked us to keep that practice under review. That investigation was halted pending the completion of our inquiry into the allegations against my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. We think, therefore, that it would be sensible to resume that work immediately, which should not take too long to complete.

That, together with the views and advice expressed by the House in today's debate and by hon. Members who undoubtedly will not have the fortune to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, but who may care to get in touch with us, should enable the Committee to give more mature consideration to the wider views raised in my right hon. and learned Friend's second motion. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will agree that that plan of action makes sense and that the Committee will be acting within the spirit and meaning of his motion. I especially hope that the House will give its support.

5.21 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I agree with the Leader of the House that this can only be an unhappy occasion for Members of Parliament. It is certainly not an occasion in which I take any pleasure. I hope that everyone will agree with that. In many respects, I can understand better than most the misery that the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) must be feeling now.

I thank the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), and his colleagues for performing effectively, fairly and objectively what could only have been a difficult task. Anyone who has looked at the Select Committee report must conclude that the Committee carried out its difficult duties meticulously. I can understand why the hon. Member for Winchester said that he found some of the procedures difficult. That could only be the case, as they referred to matters which occurred seven or eight years ago. Nevertheless, the Committee had a duty to the House, which it carried out fairly and well.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I entirely agree that, so far as it was possible, the Committee carried out its duties meticulously and impartially. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it set itself a high burden of proof to discharge —that of proof beyond reasonable doubt? Does the hon. Gentleman think that that burden is safely discharged when the accused, as my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) is, could not cross-examine the witnesses who were producing evidence against him, nor produce witnesses in his own favour, nor secure by discovering documents or other papers which belonged to him but were not in his possession and which were vital to prove his case?

Dr. Cunningham: With respect, I was coming to those points. If the hon. Gentleman had waited before making a long intervention, he would have heard what I have to say.

I am expressing my view. I am in no sense expressing the view of the shadow Cabinet or the parliamentary Labour party, as this is, rightly, a matter for individual Members on a free vote. There is no question of the hon. Member for Winchester being before a court. So far as I

can tell—I have looked carefully at the matter, as hon. Members would expect—the hon. Member has not acted unlawfully. The House is not conducting itself as though it were a court and the hon. Gentleman charged with a criminal offence. We should be clear about that.

As for the opportunities that the hon. Gentleman had to respond to evidence, I understand from reading the report that he had the opportunity to comment on what witnesses had said. In so far as these imperfect procedures can work satisfactorily, it seems that they did.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I do not want this to turn into an arcane legal battle between a range of Queen's counsel on either side of the House, so I shall not give way.

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman is scared to give way.

Dr. Cunningham: I am not scared of anything. This is not a court of law. We are not talking about legal procedures. We are dealing with this problem on the basis of a Select Committee report on motions before the House.

The Committee came to a unanimous decision that the hon. Member for Winchester, for whatever reasons—I am perfectly prepared to accept that his judgment about his obligations was wrong—twice breached the rules on the disclosure of interests and that the matter was serious. In paragraph 103 of its report the Committee asks the House to take action on this serious matter. That is perfectly proper. It was not for the Committee to recommend what action should be taken. That is for the House to decide. As I support the way in which the matter has been conducted so far, I believe that we should address ourselves to how the House could take action.

We could simply take note of the report and take the matter no further. In the past the House has acted similarly. We could have tabled a motion requiring you, Mr. Speaker, to reprimand the hon. Member for Winchester and taken no further action. We could support a motion with or without amendment tabled by the Leader of the House for a period of exclusion from the Chamber. I understand that, as we are discussing the matter on a motion and not under Standing Order No. 43, the Leader of the House has placed the correct interpretation on the motion's effect—that even if the motion is carried, with or without amendment, the hon. Gentleman will be excluded from our proceedings in the Chamber, but not from the precincts of the House.

Alternatively, we could have discussed and voted on a motion to expel the hon. Member from the House altogether. I do not hesitate to say that I am pleased that no such motion has even appeared on the Order Paper. I would not have voted for it. Such a penalty would not have been commensurate with the nature of the problem. Moreover, such a judgment is for the electors of the constituency of Winchester, not for Members of this House. In some senses, whatever decision the House may reach, the hon. Gentleman has the opportunity of an appeal—if that is the appropriate word—to his constituents to use their judgment about what has transpired.

Regrettably, the House is asked from time to time to vote to exclude a Member for a period. If a Member cheeks the Chair or does not accept the authority of the Chair, a motion is moved and we vote to exclude that Member for a limited period. If Members abuse the Mace, as they do from time to time—we have had one from each principal party recently—either they apologise immediately and the matter is dropped or they, too, are the subject of a motion to exclude them from the House.

I hope that everyone will agree that the rules on the disclosure of interests are minimal. I have declared my interests as a Member sponsored by a trade union, as I have been for my 20 years in the House, and latterly as a result of being engaged to give scientific and other advice in the commercial sector. The rules are a minimal requirement of the House and are perhaps ready for review. The obligations on us are not onerous. Since the Select Committee reported unanimously that the hon. Member for Winchester is in clear breach of those rules and that it is a serious matter, it would render the whole business of the Register of Members' Interests inoperable, if not a laughing stock outside, if the House simply took note of the report and left the matter there.

The right course of action—I emphasise that I am speaking personally—would be to support a motion to exclude the hon. Member for Winchester from the House for a period. The House may well decide not to take any action—we shall see—but our constituents, and others, would not understand if the House so decided when a Select Committee had considered the matter, listened to the evidence and reported unanimously that the matter was serious. The public would not think that that was the right thing to do. I agree with the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), that there is concern about the conduct of hon. Members.

As on other occasions, this is one of those issues where the standards and requirements in local government are already well in advance of the requirements placed upon hon. Members. I believe that the third motion on the Order Paper, which calls upon the Select Committee to review such matters, should be supported. I shall certainly vote for it. The House—or, to be fair to the Liberal Democrats, the Conservative and Labour parties—are in a kind of historical time warp on such matters. The belief is that, in financial terms, private enterprise backs one side and the trade unions, by and large, back the other—and usually, but not always, that backing is repeated in political terms.

We should look at the way in which we finance the democratic process, because the way in which it operates is out of tune with the reality of life in other western democracies. Perhaps that wider remit is not for the Select Committee, but any action taken by the House should be based on the broadest context of what is or is not acceptable in terms of the external financial arrangements of hon. Members and political parties. We should consider whether state aid should be given for political parties—I support that without hesitation—and whether we should have better facilities and support for hon. Members and their staff. Those matters are germane to the debate.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Earlier the hon. Gentleman said that he supported the third motion, but I believe that he means the second, which was originally the third.

Dr. Cunningham: I apologise for that slip of the tongue. I meant that I supported the motion in the name of the Leader of the House calling for the matter to be referred to the Select Committee.

I am pleased that the House is conducting this difficult debate in a serious manner and, I hope, even in a mood of some magnanimity. There is nothing worse than a sanctimonious mob on such occasions.

It must have taken considerable courage and fortitude on the part of the hon. Member for Winchester to apologise unequivocally and fully, and I pay tribute to him for that. He has accepted the report of the Committee and, no doubt, will accept the decision of the House.

5.34 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) and me, which has been selected for inclusion in the debate.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and congratulate him on the non-partisan way in which he approached this subject. I hope that that will be echoed by others who take part in the debate.

Although I support the motion in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House in respect of agreeing with the Select Committee on Members' Interests' report, and its endorsement of the Committee's findings, I cannot agree with the suspension of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). He has been pilloried unmercifully and unjustifiably in the national press, but he has not been treated so by his local press, which knows him better. He and his family have been through a living hell since long before the inquiry began. I submit that he has suffered enough. Although I accept that this is a matter for the House to decide, I do not believe that hon. Members should feel obliged to rub salt into the wounds. As has already been mentioned, this is a House of Commons occasion, much more so than a party political one, but it is also an occasion that we should not relish.

I also agree wholeheartedly with the second motion tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend, particularly regarding further study of the procedures that the Select Committee uses to investigate complaints such as this. The Select Committee considered complaints from a journalist who, for a number of years, has had a financial interest in investigating my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. He said to the Committee:

"I've got cracking on Mr. Browne for years."

The hon. Member for Copeland has already said that the procedures are imperfect. Under those procedures, the Select Committee was unable to let my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester present his case as fully as he would have liked, call witnesses to give evidence on his behalf, or cross-examine the complainant or his other witnesses. It was a rather weird form of trial, but the Committee was not, of course, a court of law. My hon. Friend has not broken the law of the land; he has broken the rules of the House of Commons.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Although the House may not be a court of law, does the hon. Gentleman agree that an hon. Member's reputation could be ruined as a result of the decision of the Select Committee? If an accusation is laid against anyone, it is only natural justice for him to be entitled to invite witnesses on his behalf and also to cross-examine.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Colvin: The response to that welcome intervention demonstrates that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are supported by most hon. Members present.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Under the present procedures, it is possible for an hon. Member in such a situation to call witnesses—we have never denied that. We were working within the rules. Evidence was presented from the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne)—in writing, it is true—and he was also able to comment, in writing upon the evidence supplied by the complainant. The same privilege was given to the complainant.

Mr. Colvin: The House will also welcome that intervention, and I think that it will accept that, when we seek to find justice, an analogy should be drawn with courts of law. I hope that the House will agree that the Select Committee should undertake a study of its procedures, and perhaps it will draw on the analogy of courts of law to see whether procedures can be improved so that hon. Members who appear before it as a result of complaints have a fairer opportunity to present their case and cross-examine witnesses.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I cannot understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He says that witnesses could not be called. As I understand it, the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) conceded to the House today that he was in error and made mistakes. Why should he want to bring witnesses when he concedes that he was in error?

Mr. Colvin: I am referring to the general procedures, not the specific case. As I said, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester has already admitted that he broke the Rules of the House. I am saying that those rules are accepted by all to be imprecise. The letter from the Registrar that accompanies the form that we are regularly invited to complete sets out the Register's fundamental purpose. It states:

"the purpose of this register is to provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member of Parliament may receive which might be thought to affect his conduct as a Member of Parliament or influence his actions, speeches, or vote in Parliament."

That description is capable of widely different interpretations, and it is not surprising that, in those cases where a complaint against my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester was upheld in the Committee, it was as a result of oversight or failure on his part to understand what the rules are all about.

Mr. Dalyell: In the light of what the hon. Gentleman has just said, will he give the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) an opportunity to clarify what some of us understood him to say in his opening statement, to the effect that he was less than happy with some of the procedures? If the hon. Member for Winchester was unhappy, should he not specify why he was unhappy and what he was unhappy about? Should he not be given that opportunity?

Mr. Colvin: That would prejudge the study that the Select Committee is about to undertake. From the reaction

of the House so far, I do not think that many hon. Members are entirely happy with the Select Committee procedures under the rules as they are currently drawn. That is what the Select Committee has to consider.

Hon. Members will know only too well that our duties as Members of Parliament and the triangular way of life that we lead, consisting of Parliament, the constituency and home—home always seems to come last—put heavy strains on our families and marriages. Some of us are lucky and some are not. The divorce rate among hon. Members is one of the highest.

My hon. Friend was one of the unlucky ones. His particularly acrimonious divorce and the determination of his ex-wife to destroy him were largely responsible for the journalistic inquiries and subsequent complaints, based largely on evidence produced mainly by the former Mrs. Browne. It is not our job to debate the matrimonial affairs of my hon. Friend. However, we must acknowledge that it was mainly his divorce that led to the complaints against him.

Probably the most damaging of my hon. Friend's errors of judgment was, following a bad press in connection with his divorce, to proceed with his private Member's Bill on privacy. I can well understand why he did that, but it was probably because of that Bill that the national press has been doubly hard on him during the past few months.

My hon. Friend's constituency is adjacent to mine, and for a while he was my Member of Parliament. I have seen him at work in and around Winchester, and I have read the many good things about him and his parliamentary and constituency work in my local press. No one works harder for those whom he represents. He certainly had difficulties with his constituency association following his divorce, when, understandably, people took sides. We can also divide his association today into the "workers" who are for him and the "talkers" who may be against him.

But then Winchester has a record of being tough on its Members of Parliament. Rear-Admiral Morgan-Giles, now Rear-Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles, who will be remembered with great affection and respect in this place, also faced——

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Gunboat, gunboat.

Mr. Colvin: Did the hon. Gentleman shout, "Gunboat, gunboat," because that is what they used to shout?

Admiral Morgan-Giles also faced a special general meeting calling for his deselection—we Conservatives started it long before the Opposition thought of it. I forget what the issue was about; it was either the route of the M3 or the fact that his majority had slipped below 20,000, but he saw off his opponents by 2,000 votes to 120. I hope that my hon. Friend does so too, if he is forced into that position.

Whatever action we may, or may not, take tonight, it is the electors of Winchester who will have the final say. They sent my hon. Friend here and they will decide whether he returns at the next general election. From experience, I believe that he will return. At the general election in 1987, his majority may have fallen, largely due to demographic changes in the constituency, but his personal vote actually increased.

There are many people in Winchester who give my hon. Friend considerable support. The Dean of Winchester, who was for some time Mr. Speaker's chaplain, said some good and supportive things about my hon. Friend on television just the other day. The lord lieutenant of Hampshire, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir James Scott, in whose home my hon. Friend has a small flat, backs him. His Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Edward Kellett-Bowman, said that he was the hardest-working and most helpful of his constituency Members of Parliament. I intend no untoward criticism of other hon. Members in his Euro-constituency. My hon. Friend now has a wife who is enormously loyal and supportive to him and his work as a Member of Parliament. She has been an absolute brick through these hellish months and is immensely popular in his constituency.

My hon. Friend has made errors of judgment—we all accept that, as he does. But then, who has not made such errors? He has broken our rules, but that is partly due to the loose way in which they are written. My hon. Friend has apologised generously to the House for his mistakes. The House is magnanimous and understanding enough to accept his apology, and I am sure that, when this sorry day is over, whatever the outcome, for the vast majority of us, the hon. Member for Winchester will remain our hon. Friend.

5.48 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): We are not debating the general conduct of the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). When the speech of the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) is read in *Hansard*, it will be seen to have been wholly irrelevant to the major questions that concern the House.

We are having one of those rare debates when the House discusses the obligations that Members of Parliament owe to their electors and each other, the question of openness in Parliament, how open we should be and how to deal with cases when there may be a conflict of interest between a Member's duties to his or her constituents and his or her pecuniary interests. This is a House of Commons matter, as has been said, and it affects us in all parties. We are all responsible for what we do, both as individuals and as Members.

I have tabled two amendments, and I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for selecting them. The first recommends a reprimand rather than a suspension, and the second calls for legislation in place of the voluntary Register, because we are dealing with potentially corrupt practices. I am not speaking about the hon. Member for Winchester; I am talking about potentially corrupt practices.

I read the Select Committee report; it upheld some grave and serious complaints. The hon. Gentleman has done himself and his party and the House damage, but because of the very fact that we have all suffered, we have to be careful how we act in this case. The party of which he is a member must be very embarrassed by what has happened, and the party of which I am a member must be tempted to exploit it politically. The whole House is angry that the conduct of one Member might have damaged the public esteem in which all Members are held. It is not just that we are not a court of law, although we are not; it is also that we are not exactly an independent jury in the hon. Member's case.

The hon. Member for Winchester has not broken the law, because there is no law. That is what is wrong, and the people on trial today are the House, more so than the hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Tony Benn]

I do not favour suspension, for the reasons that have already been widely canvassed. Members are elected by and are answerable to their constituents. Candidates are answerable to their local parties. The sentence proposed is the wrong one. One, two or three months' suspension without pay is absolutely meaningless. I had not realised until it was explained that the hon. Gentleman will be able to use the facilities of the House, so what possible punishment can there be in that, if indeed punishment be meant? However, the suspension would deny the electors of Winchester a voice in the House that they might need, and we have no right to deny them that.

I have therefore looked at other remedies and settled on the one that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) suffered—the penalty of a reprimand. The Leader of the House said that a reprimand was not as severe as a suspension. Any hon. Member who has seen a reprimand will know that it is more severe than a suspension. The hon. Gentleman in question would stand in his place and Mr. Speaker, wearing his three-cornered hat and seated, would deliver the reprimand, which would be recorded not only in *Hansard* but in the Journal of the House. I would regard it as a terrifying experience to be reprimanded by the Speaker for a breach of a resolution of the House. With television, the experience would be even more frightening.

So I recommend that the hon. Gentleman be reprimanded, not suspended, for an offence which he, in all fairness, admitted in his statement was an error of judgment.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): The right hon. Gentleman referred to the last occasion when a reprimand was administered. Many of us who saw that occasion thought that it was a repellent event that should never be repeated. Can the right hon. Gentleman recall it? If so, does he really consider such a reprimand an appropriate remedy?

Mr. Benn: I can only say that the House must act when its own resolutions have been defied. I voted against the suspension of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), giving the same reasons that I am giving now—and my party was more angry then than the Conservative party. I believe that a reprimand is a proper way to deal with a breach of rules. They are, after all, only rules——

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I was severely censured and reprimanded by the House for alleging that Members of Parliament were available for hire? Later, it was proved that Maudling, Cordle and Roberts had indeed been hired, but no one ever gave me a free pardon. That is one of the problems with reprimands or censures: one can be reprimanded and then proved right.

Mr. Benn: I give way to the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell).

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): May I echo what my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) has just said? I thought that the last reprimand in the House was a nauseating occasion. The House should never go through those procedures again.

Mr. Benn: The House must make up its own mind. The Leader of the House said that my proposal was less severe than a suspension, but I do not take that view. I shall vote against the hon. Gentleman's suspension for any length of time, and I shall vote against the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), who said that nothing should be done.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that these interventions by Conservative Members confirm precisely what my right hon. Friend has been saying—that a reprimand is more serious and humiliating than suspension? So my right hon. Friend is surely on the right track.

Mr. Benn: I am trying to think of an appropriate response by the House to a breach of its rules which will not impose a financial penalty on the hon. Member for Winchester. After all, a month's suspension without pay sounds like a penalty imposed by a court of law, and it denies his constituents the right to be represented.

I am much more concerned with my second amendment. What obligations do Members owe the electors of this country? That is the real question. I have been trying to follow through the obligations that we assume. First, all of us before we are elected issue an election address. I have never yet met a Member who has put his business interests on his election address. The election address contains political pledges, and so on.

Next we come to the House and go to the Table. I have been struck by the strangeness of our arrival, with an election address that has helped to propel us here. We take the oath:

"I do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and successors according to law. So help me God."

We do not say that we will implement certain programmes or abide by the rules of the House; we just give a ritual oath of allegiance.

Once we are here, how do our constituents see what we do? They read *Hansard* or, if they can afford £10, they read the Register of Members' Interests, which is a business prospectus—all 98 pages of it. Any company that wants a contact with a Member of Parliament would do well to start by looking at the Register of Members' Interests to see who could be recruited to its board from among the new Members. That is a much more serious matter.

Then we must consider how to define interests. I, like every former Cabinet Minister, received a confidential minute from the Prime Minister:

"Cabinet: Procedure. Questions of Procedure for Ministers",

signed by the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan on 23 April 1976:

"I circulate a memorandum on questions of procedure".

This is a little more formidable. Any hon. Member who has ever been a Minister might care to remind himself of what Ministers are expected to do. I regard it as outrageous that the document is not published. That is a limitation on some Members of Parliament that is not known to others.

Paragraph 67—I doubt whether it has changed much in 14 years—reads:

"It is a principle of public life that Ministers must so order their affairs that no conflict arises, or appears to arise, between their private interests and their public duties."

That should apply to all Members of Parliament.

"Such a conflict may arise if a Minister takes an active part in any, undertaking which may have contractual or other relations with a Government Department".

That should apply to Members of Parliament, too.

"Ministers should be free to give full attention to their official duties, and they should not engage in other activities which might be thought to distract their attention from those duties."

Perhaps that principle should apply to Members of Parliament.

"Ministers must on assuming office resign any directorships which they may hold, whether in public or private companies and whether the directorship carries remuneration or is honorary."

That might or might not be applicable to the House as a whole.

This is a wholly different approach from the cosy investigation of a voluntary undertaking which was introduced years after it should have been.

I have already mentioned the issue of disclosure. No disclosure is made to the electors, who have a vested interest in the matter. I believe that when the polling card is sent by the electoral registration officer it should include a register of all the interests of all the candidates as well as of the Member of Parliament. If that is not done, there should be a requirement that the electoral address should include them. The average elector connected with any party does not go to the Register of Members' Interests to find out the interests of his candidate. People should be allowed to know, and that would be a provision.

In law there are no rules on interests. I am interested in these matters and I looked up the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975. There are 11 pages of disqualifications to over 300 offices. Any Member who applies for, and receives, the Chiltern Hundreds is immediately disqualified. What is it about the Chiltern Hundreds that makes it a task incompatible with membership? It is the notion of an office of profit. I looked up some of the offices that lead to disqualification and found that some of them are absurd. They include membership of the Pilotage Commission and chairmanship of the British Library Board; and 43 amendments have just come out.

We should define offices, whether of profit under the Crown or anywhere else, that are incompatible with membership. I regard as quite incompatible with membership of the House the chairmanship of a company that has contractual relations with the Ministry of Defence or any other Government Department. That should be a disqualifying office and the House should look at that in terms of legislation. It might even remove some of the disqualifying offices in the House of Commons Disqualification Act.

There is no definition of a corrupt practice. "Corruption" has many meanings and is interpreted in many ways, but it is the use of improper influence to secure something. If a candidate in an election goes around putting 50p coins in pints of beer, in the way that candidates in the 19th century used to do with half-crowns, that is a corrupt practice. Such people are taken to court on an election petition and the court determines whether they have acquired a seat by a corrupt practice. That is all laid down in the Act. I have some of the old cases before me and they show that that is the proper way to deal with an issue that we have been dodging through a debate that has not got to the root of the matter.

These matters should be dealt with by the courts. As soon as the House passes a law it will not be for us to interpret that law; it will be for the courts.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Like, I suspect, some other hon. Members, I agree with the attractiveness of what the right hon. Gentleman suggests—the idea of a compulsory or legal registration system. The majority of hon. Members do not receive unearned income, dividends or unearned income from wealthy wives. This matter bedevils British politics. Most hon. Members have to rely on their salary or on some other source of earned income. Under the Labour Government in 1975 a vote on linking the salary of hon. Members to the salary scale of assistance secretaries was defeated by a large majority. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if the House had grasped the nettle of setting a realistic professional salary for Members there would not be orientation towards dubious outside interests?

Mr. Benn: To take an extreme case, it is arguable that a Member of Parliament should publish his income tax return. That is a clear answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. I doubt whether that would be welcome, but if the House adopted such a rule it would settle all the arguments about private incomes. When my father was first elected in 1906 there was no parliamentary salary. He worked as a journalist in the City of London in the morning and went to the House in the afternoon. The House could be filled if people had to pay £1,000 a year to be a Member, especially as we now know the business interests that can be attracted by a Member of Parliament.

I should now like to deal with the register of lobbyists. The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, spoke about that. The whole business world that has grown up around influencing Members of Parliament is staggering. I throw away 95 per cent. by weight of my mail every day, all of which is paid for by the Chancellor of the Exchequer because it is a legitimate business expense to send annual reports to hon. Members.

The Palace of Westminster is crowded with lobbyists. Anyone who wants to know where they are has to look at *The House Magazine*. I looked it up and photocopied a couple of pages. The Freight Transport Association represents the total transport interests. There is also the name of its controller of legal and parliamentary affairs. We should not need to look at *The House Magazine* to find who is trying to win our support; there should be a register. I would go further and say that research assistants and perhaps members of the Lobby should be reasonably asked to declare their interests.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They already do that.

Mr. Benn: In that case, I should like to add another category of temporary people attached to the House. I had a letter from an American student who asked me to take him on as a research assistant, which I did not do. I am sure that many hon. Members had such letters. He included with the letter his curriculum vitae and a reference which I shall read to the House. I shall not mention his name so that he will not be embarrassed. The letter was from Michael Lekson, deputy counsellor for political affairs in the American embassy, and he said what a wonderful man this guy was. He said that he had

"clearly gotten full benefit from his earlier internship at the House of Commons. We profited considerably from his

[Mr. Benn]

knowledge and insights about Commons' members, procedures, and folkways—most notably in delegating to him two priority projects.

The first was to select up-and-coming Conservative parliamentarians to submit to an Embassy committee choosing potential recipients of International Visitor grants. This process was a bureaucratic nightmare. Identifying the future leaders was only the start. He also determined who had been considered before by researching through chaotic files in this and other offices; got the essential personal and possible travel data from the potential nominees without committing the Embassy to offer a trip; and documented his nominations for consideration by a traditionally sceptical committee. Mr. ... did all this superbly—and, as a side-benefit, systematised our computerised records on parliamentarians. Eight of his nine nominations have been accepted and the ninth is under active consideration."

I have tried to introduce a note of humour. People send their interns here for very good reasons. I would like the American embassy to give us a list. We must legislate on this matter.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The right hon. Gentleman has touched on a matter that will strike a chord in the hearts of many hon. Members. As it returns to the subject of lobbying, the Select Committee on Members' Interests would be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman and any other hon. Members would submit as evidence documentation of the sort that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned. The right hon. Gentleman implied that a large proportion of the costs that American research assistants incur are met by the British taxpayer.

Mr. Benn: I am not getting at researchers, because my son was a research assistant to a senator in Washington and came back and wrote a thesis on the White House staff. I am not complaining about researchers, but I am saying that we should know and we should legislate. Nothing has convinced me more of the need for legislation than hearing the cosy and courteous way in which we have spoken about the hon. Member for Winchester. We have dodged our own failure to take seriously the fact that a Member of Parliament is an attractive target for business people and that there is money to be made by Members of Parliament.

There is no enforcement. If the House is an enforcement body, it is the most curious one that I have come across. I fear that we will create a scapegoat and say that that is that. However, the problem will remain. I do not believe in "scapegoatism"; I believe in getting to the root of the matter. If we were to legislate, the matter would be resolved not by the Select Committee or the Leader of the House but by a court. I know that some hon. Members do not like to have courts looking into the conduct of Members of Parliament, but the decision to which I have referred was taken years ago. The House of Commons decided then not to try contested elections in the House itself, but to hand them over to the courts.

Up to a certain date—I do not remember when; it may have been 1700 or a bit later; in any case, the matter is referred to in "Erskine May"—if there was a petition against an election, the House voted. But it voted on party lines. So the matter was pushed out to the election court. I speak as somebody who has appeared before two election courts. Actually, one of them disqualified me. Two judges, having sat for a fortnight, said that nothing had changed since 1626, and, as a result, I was thrown out of the House. A court to look at the proper relationship of Members of Parliament, with their financial interests, to the House and to their constituents is what we should be considering.

It is with some regret that I say that I fear that the Palace of Westminster is in danger of degenerating into a marketplace, where influence is traded for favours, where backhanders and patronage are rife, and where we turn a blind eye to these things. We have the ancient rituals—the office of profit under the Crown, the Chiltern Hundreds—but we ignore the real conflicts between financial and commercial interests and parliamentary duties. Parliamentary privilege has come to be a means of protecting Members from their constituents, whereas I have always taken the view that parliamentary privilege is intended to protect constituents and to enable Members to do their job.

There is a certain high-minded cover over our proceedings, designed to confuse and mislead people into believing that all is well. If we want to end the cynicism, let us realise that this debate, if interpreted in a certain way, could lead to greater cynicism. If that happens, we shall have damaged the institution itself. Perhaps it is time to turn the money-changers out of the temple. Today is the time to begin.

6.11 pm

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): I listened with great interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I have some sympathy with what he said, because, like him, I am not entirely happy with the procedure that, as a member of the Select Committee, I underwent during the period of the Committee's examination of this matter. I think that, in all, that was nine months. The Committee's report is unanimous, and I agree entirely with its finding. In that respect, I have no quarrel at all. The fact that the report came out so well was due not only to the Committee's members but also to its Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). He was an excellent Chairman, who handled the Committee extraordinarily well.

But it was not a pleasant experience. As has already been mentioned, there was talk of stolen documents. In many cases, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) had no copies. As has been said, a divorced wife passed evidence to a journalist, and writs were issued against that journalist. Eight-year-old handwritten notes—perhaps forged, perhaps not—were put before us. Not surprisingly, in view of the time lag, there were conflicts of evidence. It really was a most unpleasant business.

Of course, in 1982, when all this happened, the climate of opinion in the House was very different from the climate of today. Indeed, at that time Mr. Enoch Powell refused to register at all. We have been judging my hon. Friend in respect of events in 1982 by standards of 1989. I do not say that that is improper. However, it is what we have been doing, and I am sure that the House would wish to keep that in mind.

My conclusion, about which I have thought a great deal, is that, within the rules of the House, justice was indeed done by the Committee. However, I question whether natural justice has been done to my hon. Friend. "Natural justice" is an expression that was used earlier today. I question whether the retribution bears any relation to the offence. Let me explain as quickly as I can

why I have the sense of unease that I have had for several months, and why I find myself being critical of rules of the House.

First, those rules are ambiguous; they are subject to various interpretations. Even we on the Committee had to have a discussion before we could agree exactly what they meant. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield talked about their friendliness and cosiness. It is fine to be friendly and cosy, provided the stakes are not so high, but when the stakes are as high as they are in this case—at stake is not only my hon. Friend's reputation but perhaps even his living, not only as a constituency representative but also in respect of business matters—one cannot be friendly and cosy.

I refer to this wretched business only for the purpose of illustrating the point I am making. Paragraph 3 of the introduction to the report refers to a resolution of the House which says that the Member

"shall disclose any relevant pecuniary interest or benefit of whatever nature, whether direct or indirect, that he may have had, may have or may be expecting to have."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1974, Vol. 874, c. 538.]

Let me apply that to the case of 3Cs—one of those in respect of which the case against my hon. Friend was upheld, although no action was recommended. I use this case merely to demonstrate why I think that, perhaps, the rules are too cosy and friendly.

Clearly my hon. Friend wanted to make money out of cable over a period. However, in March 1982 he wrote to the chairman of Thorn-EMI stating that he had considered setting up a company but had come to the conclusion that it would be best to work for the major corporation rather than start a new company. A copy of the letter appears on pages 117 and 118 of the report. He asked—rather naively—whether the company needed a consultant. In the following months, the company invited him to lunch and told him that it did not need a consultant.

A few days later—on 20 April—came the debate on cable. What was my hon. Friend to declare in that debate? Clearly he was not to declare that he had started a company—he had not. Clearly he was not to declare that he was seeking a consultancy with EMI—he had been turned down. What was he, therefore, to declare? The view that the Committee took was that he should have declared that he was going to start a company—indeed, he did start a company a few weeks later—or that he wished to make money out of the cable business, or something like that.

My hon. Friend, in his evidence, said that he had decided after the debate to start the company, because it had been such a good debate. I agree with the finding of the Committee because of its phrase "or might be expected", but I cannot release myself from the feeling that there is there a certain amount of ambiguity that could lead to misinterpretation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I think that the hon. Gentleman is being clear with the House, but perhaps he could be even clearer if he were to say that that was not the only matter on which the Committee deliberated. There was also another document, which referred to the fact that 3Cs had been set up "some 18 months ago". That was almost 18 months prior to the speech in the House of Commons. While it could not be proved that 3Cs had been set up, the Committee received other evidence—again evidence that has been published—showing that the idea of 3Cs certainly had existed some six months earlier.

Sir William Shelton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we debated this matter, if not for weeks, then for days, and if not for days, then certainly for hours. I understand entirely what he says, and he will remember the arguments that I put forward.

Let me return to the rules. The definition of "relevance" in page iv, paragraph 3, is left to the discretion of the Member concerned. The rule continues:

"The extent to which the details of the relevant interest are disclosed is also a matter for the Member."

If my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester read that, he might be forgiven for thinking that he had nothing relevant to declare, and therefore did not have to declare anything. Either the words in the rule mean something or they mean nothing, and clearly they do not mean anything. The issue of relevance appears to be left to the view of the Member, and clearly that is not the position. That is why I am led towards the possibility of introducing legislation of the sort that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was talking about.

I turn my attention to another rule which guided the members of the Committee. I refer to paragraph 5 at the top of page V, which states:

"The purpose of this Register is to provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member of Parliament may receive which might be thought to affect his conduct".

Thought by whom? Clearly not by the Member himself—that would be nonsense. Clearly not the complainant, because of the 10 complaints which were made the Committee upheld three or four. Does the rule mean it is the view of the public? That, too, is clearly nonsense. It comes down—not necessarily wrongly, and perhaps rightly—to the members of the Select Committee and then to the House. That must be the interpretation of the phrase, but that is not apparent from the rule.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I ask the hon. Gentleman to turn his mind to the red book on standards of conduct in local government, which presupposes that, if a councillor thinks that in any circumstances he may have any sort of interest, he must declare that interest. I think that it would be wrong of the hon. Gentleman to rely too heavily on the wording of the present rules.

Sir William Shelton: I prefer that ruling to the one that we have. It is far better to leave discretion to the individual Member. It would be much wider and much easier for a Member to understand. The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) made a helpful intervention and I like what he suggests. I confess that I cannot easily see the way forward. Therefore, I welcome help from any Opposition Member.

Paragraph 6(6) deals with foreign payments. It states:

"Within this definition there is a more specific requirement to disclose in the register nine categories of pecuniary interest or other benefits."

Sub-paragraph (7) refers to

"any payments or any material benefits or advantages received from or on behalf of foreign Governments, organisations or persons."

That seems clear, but in fact it is not. A careful reading of the rules reveals that a Member does not have to make a declaration unless the payments, benefits or advantages influence the Member's conduct in Parliament, or are in some way connected with Parliament.

Foreign payments must be declared only if it may be thought that they influence a Member's actions or speeches. Consequently, my hon. Friend the Member for

[Sir William Shelton]

Winchester was not required to declare the fee which he received—I must say that it deeply impressed me by its size—unless it involved his conduct, actions or speeches. The fee was paid by a Saudi Arabian Government agency for my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester to write a report on the United States freeze on Arabian assets.

What did my hon. Friend do? He put a supplementary question to the Prime Minister about how Her Majesty's Government would respond to any extra-territorial freeze on assets in British banks. It is clear that he asked a question that related to the report and his fee. Therefore, the Committee rightly found that he was in breach of the rules. I add, for the avoidance of doubt, that the Committee was unable to obtain a copy of the report consequently. It was not aware of what the report stated and what it was about, other than what came to it by hearsay. That worried me.

I have been speaking about the ambiguity, lack of clarity and unclear interpretation of the rules. There was an enormous difficulty facing the Committee in its effort to function properly to find the truth when confronted with a complex mass of papers. The Committee was not a court of law, and it is not a court of law now. However, my Committee colleagues and I felt that we were sitting in judgment on a colleague. No one was unearthed. We had no power to send for witnesses.

I shall refer briefly to the Chidiac case, where the finding went against my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester; in other words, the Committee upheld the complaint. My hon. Friend owned a small company called Falcon, which had a contract with a London company called Selco East. He did not register that separately as it had nothing to do with his parliamentary activities. If my hon. Friend has a company, he does not have to register a client of the company unless his parliamentary activity is affected. However, my hon. Friend lobbied on behalf of a Mr. Charles Chidiac of the Lebanon in an effort, he says, to obtain orders for United Kingdom companies. Mr. Charles Chidiac was the brother of the chairman of Selco East Company. That is the joker. The Committee came to the conclusion that the brother and Mr. Charles Chidiac were so close—Mr. Charles Chidiac was working closely with Selco East of London—that my hon. Friend should have registered the interest. I agree.

The Committee received a letter from Mr. Charles Chidiac from Hawaii which exonerated my hon. Friend in every way. We, the Committee, did not accept that letter. We chose to disbelieve it. We thought that Mr. Chidiac was trying to help my hon. Friend, which he probably was. However, we were unable to question Mr. Chidiac. We were unable to bring him as a witness to the United Kingdom. First, we had no money to pay his fare. Secondly, we had no way of obliging him to come. We suggested that he might wish to come but he did not wish to do so. Mr. Chidiac, as I have said, wrote a letter exonerating my hon. Friend and we were unable to question him. As I have said also, I think that the Committee took the right decision. I signed its findings. This was a difficulty in my mind, however, and I was unhappy.

Mr. Lawrence: If the Committee was unable to question the contents of the letter and all it had was suspicion, did not the burden of proof require it to decide the issue in favour of the accused?

Sir William Shelton: I am trying not to go too deeply into the contents of the report. If my hon. and learned Friend reads the report, he will find that there was some circumstantial evidence which overweighed the letter from Mr. Chidiac. I think that the Committee came to a correct decision. There was a difficulty, however, that was apparent to me.

Mr. Dalyell: I ask the hon. Gentleman a factual question: did the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), let alone a lawyer acting on his behalf, have the opportunity at any stage to test the circumstantial evidence? Did he have an opportunity to question those who were accusing him?

Sir William Shelton: No. There was no cross-examination except by members of the Select Committee themselves. Of course, my hon. Friend received all the papers and was able, at any time he wished, to put forward his view in writing. Indeed, had he asked to be seen again, I am sure that he would have been. I think I am right in saying that he did not ask.

The inquiry was not conducted as a court of law. It was conducted on a friendly basis, with the one major problem that the stakes were so very high. It was not only my hon. Friend's existence in the House, in Winchester or in his business that was at stake; there was also the fact that there might well have been a libel case standing against his complainant. So it was a complicated and unpleasant matter.

I cannot believe that my hon. Friend had anything to gain from not registering or declaring those interests for which we found him at fault. I see no way that he could have profited. Indeed, he might have profited more in one or two cases by declaring the interests. I can only believe that he either genuinely misunderstood the rules or did not care, because he did not think it important, given that the time involved was 1982 when views were very much more lax. Therefore, I believe the retribution is far greater than the offence.

What do I think we should do? I support the second motion in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. We must consider the rules. They must be clear and concise, with no ambiguity. They should be like a short highway code so that every hon. Member knows exactly what he is supposed to do, and knows that if he does not follow the rules he will be at fault. If we had concise rules, instead of taking nine months to consider the case, it would take only nine days. If the rules were concise, there would be a clear yes or no.

I should like also consideration to be given to a statute of limitations. To have something dredged up after eight years is absurd. I suggest a statute of limitations of one, three or perhaps five years, but certainly less than eight years.

That does not solve the quasi-judicial nature of a Select Committee hearing without the safeguards of a judicial court. If the rules are being broken, they must be examined by the House. An alternative would be to transfer the matter to court, but that would be a very big step and I would not even think of it. If we clarify the rules, the way forward will be easier and simpler.

6.32 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I do not think that anyone can deny that a debate like this has human implications, especially for the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). No doubt many hon. Members, like me, have re-read the debate on 26 July 1977 when the House dealt with a Select Committee report on the conduct of Members. I was taken by a phrase used by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I will quote the full paragraph from the speech of my right hon. Friend the member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), then Leader of the House:

"I believe that we can act wisely and intelligently without any sort of vindictiveness in this matter. I believe that we have done this on many such previous occasions. But the House of Commons has occasionally in the past operated a liberal form of lynch law. It can act as a mob, and of all mobs the most objectionable is a sanctimonious mob."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1977; Vol. 936, c. 349.]

That is important. I sat through the debate, which was much more complicated. It involved two hon. Members on opposite sides of the House. The previous Friday another hon. Member had resigned.

The hon. Member for Winchester made a personal statement today. I do not boast about it, but I know what it is like to have to make a personal statement to the House. I accept the sincerity with which the hon. Gentleman made his statement. If he had made it a day or so after the publication of the Select Committee report, I believe that there would have been pressure never to debate the report. In my judgment, there would have been no need for a debate.

I do not wish to detain the House more than a few minutes. Members of Parliament are expected to set an example in all facets of their lives. Many claim that it is unfair, but we are nevertheless told from time to time, whether in respect of salaries or of conduct, that we have to be seen to set an example.

My right hon. friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that there was no law on corruption. We have not set a good example. The 1976 report of the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life, chaired by Lord Salmon, has never been debated in the House. It is to the shame of both Labour and Conservative Governments that they never found time for a debate. In the early 1980s, I asked the then Home Secretary what the Government were doing to set an example which would lead to an improvement in the standard of conduct. He answered the question by saying simply that we should set an example by all that we did; it was incumbent on Members of Parliament to set an example.

I defy any hon. Member to say that throughout his whole political life, when he has been canvassing in his own constituency or anywhere else, he has never experienced someone saying, when he has intimated his business at the door, "Clear off. You are all the same. There is no difference between the two sides. You are all in it for what you can get." I defend the House and hon. Members. It has been easier to defend our conduct since 1975 because of the Register of Members' Interests. I can say to people who put that point to me, "Yes, there are some who appear to be in it for what they can get, but by the rules of the House they have to put in the register for whom they are working." That is a defence for those who want to say that we are not all in the same boat. In giving the public perception, I sensed that I struck a chord in the memory of hon. Members. The defence provided by the Register of Members' Interests is important.

I do not want to go into the details of the Select Committee report. That would waste a lot of time. One presumes that the report has been read by every hon. Member.

I do not think that the sanction of a 20-day suspension is sufficient. There is a need for a sanction of suspension which must by definition be limited. I was unaware of the difference between the two types of suspension until the Leader of the House spoke. A suspension of 20 days is the normal maximum, but there are two types of maximum suspension. In one case the hon. Member has to remain outside the precincts; in the other, the hon. Member has the free run of the place except that he cannot come into the Chamber, speak or ask oral questions.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The hon. Gentleman will find that there is a third category. In the two normal categories, the hon. Member is suspended but is still paid. In the third category the hon. Member is suspended and is not paid. So there are three different categories.

Mr. Rooker: I accept that expansion of what I said.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield thinks that there should never be suspension but that there should be a sanction. It has been clearly indicated by some hon. Members that, to put it colloquially, bawling out by the Speaker is not on. The only other sanction available is to suspend a Member's salary. There must be a sanction of some kind. I do not know whether that is a terrible proposition, but it is not on the Order Paper today.

The hon. Member for Winchester told the Select Committee and stated in correspondence on more than one occasion that he was called more than twice the average for other hon. Members. He boasted that he was an active member and was called more than twice the average by Mr. Speaker. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman is suspended for 20 days or for three months there will be no difficulty; he will still be ahead of all of us in the running average that he has kept.

That is not an argument for suspension. My point is that either we take the Register seriously or we do not. People outside will consider that 20 days is no more than a nod and a wink or, as it has been described in print, a slap on the wrist. It will suggest that we do not take the defence of the Register seriously. That is why three months is a more suitable sanction for the problems that have been identified and accepted by the hon. Member for Winchester. Therefore, at the appropriate moment I intend to move that amendment.

6.40 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): In my intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) I drew attention to an important anomaly. A number of years ago a Select Committee of the House was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Peter Thomas, to revise the Standing Orders of the House. That Select Committee recommended to the House that when a Member was suspended from the service of the House, his salary should stop for the period of that suspension. That was not only a fair and logical correlation between the two, but got rid of what

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was seen outside the House as quite scandalous. When somebody was named by Mr. Speaker and then ordered by the House to be suspended from the service of the House, he merely did less work for the same money.

I was surprised when, in the name of the then Leader of the House, the recommendations of that Select Committee were put to the House for approval, that one was omitted and the Whips were unofficially put on against it. Therefore, we still have the position where normality is that when an hon. Member is suspended from the service of the House that hon. Member is suspended from duties, but the financial benefits of being a Member of the House —his salary—are not suspended.

Therefore, I hope that the motion in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House betokens an amendment to be put before the House so that not just in this case but in all cases where a Member's offence is considered sufficiently serious for that Member to be suspended from the service of the House, there should automatically be a suspension of salary as well. That should be the norm, not something exceptional.

It is right that in this case my right hon. and learned Friend's motion should embrace the two, but it would be equally right on occasions when an hon. Member has defied Mr. Speaker to such an extent that Mr. Speaker has to name that Member, not just for the first time but for the second and third time. The Standing Orders provide for each of those.

I hope that, if the House passes the motion, my right hon. and learned Friend will get the message that it does not want this to be a unique correlation of suspension from the service of the House with suspension from entitlement to salary, and that he will introduce an amendment to the appropriate Standing Order, so that when a Member is named, and the House has voted to suspend that Member from the service of the House, that will be the normal procedure.

There is a strong case for tightening up the rules. My impression is that comparatively few hon. Members have read them, but those who have would agree that they are quite tight already, including on the point of expectation. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) wish to intervene?

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): No.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: But there are many cases where the rules laid down by resolution of the House are broken almost every day. Those rules clearly lay down that none of the services of the House may be used for the commercial purposes of any hon. Member. How often do we receive letters through the internal mail from a parliamentary colleague asking us to come to a meeting or a lunch, or whatever it may be, which has nothing to do with parliamentary duties, but everything to do with that parliamentary colleague's consultancies?

If the rules are read, it can be seen that they state clearly that, if any hon. Member writes to another asking him to some event on the premises, he must declare in that letter that he has a relevant interest. It is not sufficient just to have it in the Register of Members' Interests. That rule is also regularly broken. Most of us know that to be the case. Therefore, the House has a considerable policing job to do. I mention those matters because they have not yet been raised today and today is the appropriate occasion to do so.

6.46 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am the youngest Member of the House so far to be called and one of the most recently elected. My colleagues and I thought that one member of our party should make a contribution, although none of us is following any party line. I bear no ill will towards the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), having only ever had courteous, albeit limited, dealings with him. For myself, I accept entirely the apology that he made to the House.

The job of the House, as the Leader of the House correctly said, is to be a disciplinary committee. The Select Committee's job was to be the agency of inquiry. We are left to decide whether to act on a recommendation that action shall be taken, but with no idea of what the Select Committee thought that action should be. We should not duck that responsibility.

Many hon. Members have made it clear how imperfect the procedure is. As a lawyer, I think that many of the views expressed about the need to improve procedure should be taken on board. My colleagues and I therefore support the second motion in the name of the Leader of the House. We believe that an inquiry into ways in which we can improve the working of the Select Committee is urgent and should be started forthwith.

I have sympathy with the amendment spoken to by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). What is declared needs to be much more clearly defined and much more comprehensively required. My only reservation is whether the appropriate first step is to legislate. The right hon. Gentleman proposed draft legislation. This would be a difficult matter about which to legislate at the best of times. It is better that, in the first place—and without prejudice to the view that we may need to legislate later —we should tighten the rules of the House. In other words, first we should have firmer rules governing our procedures and then, if they do not work, we may need to take further steps.

My hon. Friends and I—and particularly my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who was a Member of the Committee—accept the report, agree with its conclusions and endorse what it says in all its detail. So the only question for us today is what action we should take.

There is only one precedent, to which other hon. Members have referred. The House debated the actions of three hon. Members in 1977. Precedent is not helpful, except that it gives us the response of the House to that breach of the rules, as it was found to have been, so we have a point of comparison.

The hon. Member for Winchester made a mistake, to put it at its most favourable, but a question remains unanswered, and I make the point having found myself in the same position. If the hon. Member was unsure about what he should have declared, he always had the option of asking the Registrar for guidance. On one occasion I did that. I do not understand why any hon. Member who is in doubt because the rules are not clear, could not go to the Registrar and ask, "Can you help me about whether something should be included?" Had he taken advice and

followed it, I do not think that the House would be in a position to rebuke him. So far as I know, he did not do that. That was an error or judgment and his fault.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): In fairness, the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) claimed to the Committee that he had obtained advice from the Registrar, but the advice that he claimed to have been given was disputed by the Registrar in question.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that clear. The Committee should know, if advice was given, what that advice was, because the only officer policing the Register is the Registrar, and it must be to him that we look in the first instance for guidance.

There appear to be five courses of action before us—no action, expulsion, reprimand, suspension or a call to resign. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) about the first. I have in recent days sought the views of various people, not all constituents of mine and not all supporters of the Opposition parties in the House. Without exception, they have said that firm action must be taken.

It would be appropriate, therefore, to reject the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) suggesting that there should be no action. I also accept that we should not proceed with expulsion. There are clear constitutional reasons why the House does not have any justification to expel a person sent here by that Member's electorate.

Mr. Colvin: When reading the *Official Report* of the hon. Gentleman's speech tomorrow, the public might get the impression that I was recommending taking no action. That is not the case. I am saying that no punishment should be determined today. I was arguing that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) had been punished enough, but I support motions Nos. 1 and 2, with the exception of suspension. That is all that I would omit.

Mr. Hughes: Acceptance of the hon. Gentleman's amendment would mean the House taking no action at the end of the debate, a course which does not accord with the public view. Nor would it be appropriate.

We are left with the options of reprimand, suspension or a call to resign—and if suspension, whether it should be for 20 days or three months. I, too, was taken by surprise by the varieties of suspension. I had presumed that suspension meant no participation in any of the activities, as a Member of Parliament, in the House of Commons. Suspension which means only that one cannot come into the Chamber is clearly a lesser penalty than many of us had presumed would be the case.

As for a call to resign, it is a widely held view that the hon. Gentleman should have resigned. That is a matter for him and his conscience and he has chosen not to do so. The electorate of Winchester must judge in time, if he is a candidate at the next election and if he has not resigned beforehand, whether they think his decision not to resign was appropriate.

There remain two options—reprimand or suspension. Reprimand has the air of a headmaster summoning a naughty pupil for a public rebuke in an archaic way. I am not sure whether that would be seen by the public as anything other than that sort of old formality. It means, in practice, that one public action and nothing more. Although it may be regarded by some—I do not question their right to view it in this way—as a more serious punishment than suspension, I do not think that the public would see it like that. They would regard suspension as more severe.

If, then, it is to be suspension, we must consider how long it should be. Given the seriousness of the complaints upheld by the Committee and its conclusion in paragraph 103 of the report that three months would be the appropriate penalty, anything less would be seen as tokenism—the more so given how limited in effect a suspension would be.

The argument that any suspension deprives the electorate of their Member of Parliament has been dealt with well. We must all take responsibility for our actions. If those actions have the result of suspension, it means that for a period the electorate do not have their Member's full service.

My next remark will be controversial and I make it as fairly as I can. I believe that the motion might have been for three months were it not for some party self-interest. We all have party self-interest, and I do not dissociate my party's self-interest from that of any others. Winchester is a Tory-held seat in which the Labour party has come a poor third.

Mr. Ashton: What has that to do with it?

Mr. Hughes: It has a relevance to the proposal of the Leader of the House. The more severe the recommended period of suspension, the more severe the harm it would be perceived as doing to anyone acting in the Tory interest in Winchester. It would have been of no advantage to the Labour party interest there, either. I am not in a position to say that that was the reason, or was influential upon the reason, which led the Leader of the House to propose the motion, but there must be a suspicion that it might have been, and I believe that it might be true.

My next comment follows closely the points made by the hon. Member for Perry Barr, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and others. We are the most important elected body in the land, but the requirements of standards here are at present far less than those of elected councils. I agree with the Chairman of the Select Committee that our conduct should be transparent. If in doubt, we should ask. We are at present far too slack.

There is also a difference between those who come here with business interests and those who acquire such interests once they are here. The Select Committee Chairman observed the growth of outside interests in recent years, particularly those which people acquire once they arrive here. Of course, the House could not and should not be one without windows, as the Leader of the House rightly said, but there is all the difference in the world between people who come here with a business background and those who acquire one subsequently.

How do we reconcile those activities with our jobs as Members of Parliament? It seems to me that there is no question but that all our outside interests and the money that we get from them should be registered in every particular. Unless we do that, and unless the public know exactly what other influences there are or may be upon their Member of Parliament, then outside interests will be regarded as corrupting but people will not know to what

[Mr. Hughes]

extent they could corrupt. Human nature being what it is, we cannot stop people having outside interests. Therefore, we have to ensure that they are declared.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way—I have nearly finished.

We must be tougher and firmer and we must be much more open. We are sent here to represent the people—not private interests, private companies, trade unions or anyone else. The reputation of Parliament suffers, and Parliament and parliamentarians are unpopular and discredited, because people generally believe that we conceal much of what we do whereas we should reveal it. I hope that the lesson learnt today will not just be that of taking firm action in this case, but that we shall be much tougher on ourselves and on Parliament in the future.

7.1 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I have listened with the greatest interest to the whole of this debate, and I am grateful to be able to make what I hope will be a brief contribution.

I have little to say about the first motion tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. The Select Committee on Members' Interests has obviously done a thorough job within the limitations of its structure. I think that we must recognise that. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House has recognised and emphasised that, and it is therefore a matter that can be considered under the second motion tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) bitterly attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), saying that his speech had no relevance whatever to the first motion. As on so many occasions, the right hon. Gentleman is completely wrong. My hon. Friend was talking about the reputation of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), of his personal knowledge of him, and of the views of those people acquainted with him. He was entitled to do that and, what is more, the House, in making its judgment, is entitled to take into account the general activities of an hon. Member and the contribution he has made to the House and to our national life.

I am glad to see the right hon. Member for Chesterfield back in his place. His attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside, saying that his speech was irrelevant, shows a complete lack of understanding of the circumstances of the House. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside for what he said about my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester.

I think that each of us should form our own judgment about the motion. Having listened carefully, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester has suffered from a vast amount of publicity about the whole of this episode. The Select Committee has reported in clear terms and that has been widely publicised. My hon. Friend's constituents know about every episode in detail and it is for his constituents to make up their minds whether they wish him to continue to be their representative.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester has apologised to the House for what he now recognises as his mistakes. My conclusion is that the House should accept that apology. In my experience, the House has always been magnanimous to Ministers or hon. Members who recognise their errors and come to the House to apologise. In this instance I believe that that is the right step to take.

I am not trying to rebuke my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, but I think that he has tried to produce a solution which would meet disparate views in the House. This is a personal matter for each of us to decide and I think that it has been settled because the apology has been made; the whole House knows it and my hon. Friend's constituents know it.

The second motion causes me some apprehension, and I say so quite frankly to my right hon. and learned Friend. Two views have been expressed today about how these issues should be dealt with in the House. Personally I think that they should also affect the other place, but that has not been mentioned. As far as the House of Commons is concerned, there are two approaches: first, that we should rely on the integrity of each hon. Member; secondly—the other extreme put forward by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield—that the whole issue must be laid down in detailed law.

I could not disagree more. Consider the matter from the practical point of view. If one wanted to take action against an hon. Member in such circumstances, the possibility of doing so by using the legal system is minimised and not maximised. We know that from the many other cases that are in the public eye today, some of which have been mentioned this afternoon. I strongly reject the idea that Members' interests should be embodied in a new law which would be enforced in the courts.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield was quite frank. He said that the burden would pass from us and we would have nothing more to do with it. We could wash our hands of it because it would all be settled by the judges. Again, I could not disagree more.

Therefore, I return to my original point: we must depend on the integrity of hon. Members. We must depend on each other. In my view, looking back over the years, that has always been the basis of relationships among hon. Members and Ministers.

Mr. Benn: I have listened intently to the right hon. Gentleman. Will he turn his attention to one point that I made—whether the issue is decided by voluntary or legislative action? Does he think that there are any commercial interests which are incompatible with membership of the House, and, if so, what should the House do about them? The right hon. Gentleman was the father of the phrase "the unacceptable face of capitalism". I hope that he will not forget that that may have a special application to those people who are elected to serve the public good.

Mr. Heath: The phrase "the unacceptable face of capitalism" has had far more effect in the past 20 years than anything that could have been done by legislation, and that still remains the case.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield asked about interests that are incompatible with our duties to the House. Once again, he takes an extreme view. He said that we should be full-time members of the House of Commons and should have no other interests so that we could look after our constituents. That is not the tradition of the House, it never has been, and it never will be if we are to

be effective. Opposition Members should recognise that if we were that we would cut ourselves off from the outside world.

Why did the first majority Labour Government in 1945 find it so difficult to deal with many outside interests? Because they had cut themselves off from the rest of the world. That policy would result in people of ability and experience not wanting to become Members of Parliament because they would say that they would not be allowed to continue with their other activities. The House would lose that experience.

When I first came to the House, it contained some very distinguished chairmen of top companies. There was no need for them to be on a register; everyone knew that the chairman of Lucas was the chairman of Lucas. When we saw his name on the tickertape, we would say, "We must get back into the Chamber and hear what he has to say." The right hon. Member for Chesterfield is trying to exclude more and more people like that.

There is another side to it. At that time trade union leaders were allowed to become Members of Parliament; it was only shortly afterwards that the TUC general council laid down a rule preventing them from doing so. When they were Members of Parliament, of course they spoke, and we all knew that they were expected to speak from the point of view of their unions as well as that of their constituents. No one questioned that; it was automatically accepted. We also knew that they were financed, but there was nothing wrong with that, because we all knew about it. If such Members were speaking on a specifically trade union matter, we felt that we were being treated like children if they said, "I must declare my interest: I am the general secretary of such and such a union." We relied on the integrity of the Member, and it worked.

It causes me some apprehension that the requirements in the amendments tabled to the second motion would impose considerable pressures on those examining such matters. The crucial question is, "What interests has a Member that affect his conduct in the House of Commons?"

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Money.

Mr. Heath: One of the amendments calls for the declaration of all shareholdings and changed circumstances. That has nothing to do with the conduct of a Member in the House of Commons. When we have an agriculture debate, will every Member be expected to stand up and say, "I must declare that I have 2,048 acres, half of which is used for sheep and half for cows"? Not for a moment. We know that, and the integrity of the Member has made it clear that he is engaged in farming activities.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield says that the constituents never know. He must have very strange constituents. I have seen few election manifestos in which the candidate does not specify his profession, his business and how he spends his time, and the local people have every right to ask the candidate, at an electoral meeting, what he does in his daily life and what he intends to give up. There is no difficulty about that; it does not require the detailed information called for in the amendments.

The right hon. Gentleman even called for the publication of income tax returns. How does that affect a Member's conduct in the House of Commons? Of course he will want to pay less tax, but everyone accepts that. There is no need to publish income tax returns to let people know that a chap wants to pay less tax.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The right hon. Gentleman is making out a case for the job of Member of Parliament not to be full time. Does he recall that, not so long ago, hon. Members trooped through the Lobbies to approve the linking of their salary with a certain Civil Service grade? That grade related to full-time workers. Surely, if a Member of Parliament is doing his job properly in the House, it should be a full-time job.

Mr. Heath: If a Member wants to make his occupation full time, he is entirely entitled to do so; nothing will stop him. On the other hand, nothing should stop him from having other interests outside the House if he finds that compatible with his constituency work. The House has existed for centuries on the basis that the two are compatible. What is more, most constituents welcome the fact that their Member of Parliament has outside interests as well as looking after his constituency.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Surely it all depends on how we define "interests". All of us have many outside interests. What we object to is the use of interests furthered by, or involved in, membership of the House. The right hon. Gentleman is interested in music—no problem. He has a knowledge and understanding of business—again, no problem. Anything else is a different matter.

Mr. Heath: With great respect, I differ from the hon. Gentleman. When I conduct an orchestra in Jerusalem, I am liable to be accused of influencing my speeches on foreign policy. I must confess that my Arab friends get very worried about it.

As for the question of what affects Members' conduct in the House, if there is a conflict of interests we expect them to speak out. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that a councillor is expected to declare any interest in the subject of a debate, or the existence of a conflict of interests. Absolutely: we are expected to do the same. That, however, does not involve declaring shareholdings, publishing income tax returns and taking all the other actions required by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

I have said enough to demonstrate my apprehension about the consequences of an examination in which many people—out of sheer desire to know about the affairs of others—will press for the details to be made available, simply because they relate to Members of Parliament. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) acknowledges frankly that that is his view, but it is not the view of most hon. Members. It has not been their view in the past, and I do not think that it should be in the future. We should rely largely on the integrity of our Members.

By all means let us keep the Register going, and let hon. Members insert the main items, but more and more detail is being asked for. I am a member of the review board of Arthur Andersen, worldwide accountants. We have 2,200 partners, and our fees from our clients amount to $3·2 billion. How am I to return to the Registrar of Members' Interests the names of all the firms involved in the decisions that I make? Could we not be a bit more realistic? I will gladly declare my interest whenever I make a speech about accountancy—which I never do.

[Mr. Heath]

I am invited to declare the Lloyd's syndicates to which I belong, because the hon. Member for Nottingham, North wants to know whether or not I am making a loss over Louthwaite. That does not affect my attitude in the House of Commons, however, because I never take part in any debate on Lloyd's or ask a question about it—for the same reason: I do not want any misunderstanding. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman in confidence, however, that the losses on Louthwaite are considerable. They are not going to drive me out of the House of Commons, though. In fact, they may well keep me in.

I beg my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, and whichever Select Committee deals with the matter, to be realistic, and, above all, to depend on the integrity of Members of the House of Commons.

7.17 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for selecting the amendment to which I have put my name, calling on the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) to resign in view of the findings of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. We tabled the amendment for a simple reason. The House is made up of people who have been elected by their constituents to represent them, and—as many others have said—they should be answerable to those constituents for their activities and interests, and for how they conduct those interests.

If the House takes it upon itself to expel hon. Members whom it did not elect—they were elected in a general election or by-election—it is, in effect, depriving them of the ability to represent their constituents in Parliament. The hon. Member for Winchester may have apologised, but he has admitted making a serious error in, for example, not declaring an income of $88,000—I imagine that amounts to more than £50,000—and a number of other interests. That is very serious.

The idea that a Member of Parliament is anything but full time may seem perfectly normal to many Conservative Members, but people outside do not see it the same way. They regard us as people who have been elected to the House on a substantial salary, which is far above the average industrial wage, far above the income of old-age pensioners and far above that of many people in ordinary middle-income jobs. Not unreasonably, they expect us to devote our energies to working to represent them, rather than creating income for ourselves through outside financial interests.

I support the principle of having a Register of Members' Interests. That is important. However, I do not think that the Register of Members' Interests goes anywhere like far enough. There is, for example, the question of for whom a particular company is working. If an hon. Member is a director of a public relations company, a statement to that effect is absolutely meaningless to me or to anybody else reading the Register. I want to know on behalf of what interests that public relations company is working. If an hon. Member is a director of a holding company, do we know what its subsidiaries are? Do we know what transactions are taking place? Do we know what influence that hon. Member can bring to bear on any decisions that are made?

We now come to the murkier area where an hon. Member might be a director or a substantial shareholder in a company that has direct dealings with central Government, such as the Ministry of Defence or any other Department. Frankly, that stinks to people outside the House. They ask, "Why can't we get a house to live in? We have insufficient pension to live on. We have all sorts of environmental problems in our constituency, but not only do Members of Parliament vote themselves a salary that to many of us is considerable, but they sanction substantial outside interests for themselves."

Mr. Flannery: My hon. Friends and I have considered this fact for several years now. Does my hon. Friend agree that many Conservative Members entered the House without any directorships whatever? Entry to the House is like opening an Aladdin's cave for them and that fact impels them to try to enter the House. Having become a Member, people make vast amounts of money that they would not have made if they had not managed to become a Member of the House.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for his excellent and apposite intervention. Having become a Member of Parliament by an elective process, through the ballot box, some hon. Members are saying, "I will take on this directorship, that advisership, this consultancy and that consultancy. I will act on your behalf in the House." There are many occasions when there is a potential conflict of interest and any number of occasions when those conflicts of interest become apparent.

I compare that with the attitude that is taken in statute towards local councillors. A local councillor, who is elected to represent a particular ward on a local authority, is absolutely prevented from voting on matters in which he or she might be deemed to have a direct interest. Council tenants, for example, are prevented from voting on rent increases or otherwise for council tenants in their wards. I regard that as iniquitous, but that is what happens. Likewise, if a councillor is deemed to have a particular pecuniary interest, he or she must declare it, take no part whatever in that debate, and withdraw from the chamber or committee concerned.

Furthermore, councillors are liable in law for any actions that they take as councillors. The Clay Cross councillors were debarred from holding public office under the Housing Act 1971. Councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool were debarred from holding public office and substantially surcharged following the rate capping of their local authorities, on the issue of whether they had overspent. Those councillors had not committed a crime. They had not made any money for themselves. They had simply acted in what they believed to be the best interests of the people they represented—and were punished severely as a result.

However, in this place, an hon. Member can have any number of shareholdings, directorships, outside consultancies, PR consultancies or anything else, and provided that they are declared, it is all okay. The debate is timely because it opens up that question.

Most employees work to a job description, which states that they are employed to work for a particular company. Someone who is employed as a salesman for a major company, such as GEC, would find that that company would not take kindly to one of its salaried salesmen also working privately as a salaried salesman for Siemens or for

any other competitor company. Company employees are not allowed to get involved in such things, any more than local councillors. Why should it be so very different for Members of Parliament? Why should hon. Members be allowed to stack up so many outside financial interests from which they personally can benefit a great deal?

I am also concerned about the amount of time that is taken up on those outside interests. I do not know about the social problems or the constituency case work loads of Conservative Members who have substantial directorships, but I do know that in the community that I represent, I deal with several thousand individual cases per year. It would not only be totally wrong, it would be impossible, to try to represent such a community if, at the same time, I had to attend 50 or 60 company meetings per year or various other meetings of boards of directors, or if I had to spend time in other places when I should be working for the people who elected me to this place.

Conservative Members may make light of the whole thing and say that it is a House of Commons matter. Frankly, when the House decides that something is a House of Commons matter, the House is not at its best; it is often at its very worst. This is not a House of Commons matter. It is a matter of public importance and public interest.

A great many people outside the House think, "There they go again—voting themselves a substantial rise, not turning up in the House, not voting and not taking part in the debates because they all have outside directorships." I have no outside directorships. I have no outside interests at all, yet because Conservative Members—and perhaps even some of my hon. Friends—have such interests, the whole House, and the names of the elective process and of democracy are smeared as a result. We have a responsibility, not just individually, but to the electoral and democratic process as a whole.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said—and quoted others who said the same—that if the House were composed of people with no other interests, it would be a boring place. He said that one of the problems of the 1945 Labour Government was that they did not have people of sufficient experience who could take an overview or a wider view of matters. If those who are elected to the House come from different backgrounds—from working for a company, working in the Health Service, working down a mine, being unemployed, being a housewife or a single parent or whatever—they have those reosurces, that knowledge and that experience on which to draw. Hon. Members do not need to hold a dozen directorships to have an idea how the financial system works. An hon. Member does not need tc hold directorships in 25 companies to be able to travel abroad and to find out what other people are thinking. Such outside interests do not broaden one's interests—they narrow them. They narrow an hon. Member's range of options and opinions. They have the very opposite of the effect that some hon. Members claim.

The constituency of the hon. Member for Winchester deserves representation. Serious issues face that constituency, such as the construction of a motorway through Twyford Down. Those are the sort of issues on which we were sent here to represent our constituents. That is why we are in the House. None of us was elected because we have shareholdings or directorships with certain companies.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) advanced an idea that particularly appealed to me—that the electorate should be told of all the directorships that are held by Members of Parliament. When my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) stood for election in Hampstead in 1979, I was impressed by the fact that he printed the list of directorships of the sitting Member for that constituency in his election address. We were told that that was foul play. All that my hon. Friend was doing was informing the people of Hampstead and Highgate about what their sitting Member of Parliament was doing. I thought that it was a perfectly reasonable and fair thing to do. In an election, the electorate should know who and what we are standing for and what we actually represent when we enter this place. All such interests should be registered.

The question of how the House should punish a particular hon. Member is important. I was not here when the last reprimand was delivered and have no idea of the importance or consequences of it. Presumably it would be televised and no doubt there would be great solemnity, which would be a distinct advantage.

There is also the question of suspension. The obvious point is, how can the House decide to deprive the people of Winchester of their right to be represented? The question of expulsion has also arisen, although that option is not included on the Order Paper. In an expulsion, the House is taking unto itself powers over and above those that it has been given by the people.

The Select Committee on Members' Interests spent a great deal of time going into this matter in the most incredible detail, and produced an excellent report. The hon. Member for Winchester delivered an apology to the House, but how much is an apology worth? He made a great deal of money that he did not declare. I do not know what his total income is. I do not think it unreasonable that the public should know the total income of all hon. Members from all sources, as Members, through directorships or through shareholdings. Then people could see in whose interests we are working and how we are spending our time in the House.

I should have thought that the only honourable course for the hon. Member for Winchester is to resign as a Member of the House. If he then wishes to seek nomination for subsequent re-election, that is a matter for the people of Winchester. There is no other course of action by which the people of Winchester can decide whether they wish the present Member to continue as their Member of Parliament or whether they wish to choose someone else. Anything less would damage the reputation of the House and of the democratic elective process.

I am pleased that the Leader of the House has at least accepted that the current Register of Members' Interests has shortcomings and, for that reason, has moved the second motion. I wish that the motion went further. I endorse the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield, who lists a series of specific cases and offices that should debar one from being a Member of Parliament. It is ludicrous that one cannot be a Member of Parliament if one holds the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds or any other minor, almost non-existent archaic office of profit under the Crown, whereas one can make as much money as one likes as a chairman or captain of industry and spend little time on being a Member of

[Mr. Corbyn]

Parliament, save for using the facilities, lobbying facilities and privileges awarded to Members of the House. I support my right hon. Friend's amendment.

If we are serious about being elected to the House to represent our constituents and the people of Britain, what message do we give to those who cannot afford to pay the poll tax, those who sleep in cardboard boxes, those on endless housing waiting lists, and those struggling by on a state old-age pension of less than £2,500 a year when we condone someone for forgetting or omitting to record in the Register that he received more than £50,000 from one foreign Government for one contract? Being a public representative demands the highest possible standard of public probity. For that reason and because we must defend the principle of democracy, I believe that the only honourable course is for the hon. Member for Winchester to resign.

7.32 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). It is a pity that we could not have called for the question to be put when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) completed his speech—*[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend can go now, as I shall not mention him again.

The media will be disappointed with the debate. The House has been broadly sympathetic to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and, therefore, the debate has been constructive, moderately keyed and in good humour, despite the efforts of Members such as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to raise the temperature and to substitute a load of cant and little of the milk of human kindness.

There is here a human tragedy. We still have to vote on whether to punish my hon. Friend, merely to endorse the findings of the Committee or to accept my hon. Friend's apology and do nothing further. I wish to address myself to that tragedy. The House should do something constructive about it.

I found the insight of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) interesting. He was a member of the Committee and he told us about the agony through which the Committee put itself. It drove him to the conclusion—he did not utter it, but he has told me that he would like me to tell the House of it—that he will vote against the suspension of my hon. Friend.

I am no particular friend of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, because our paths hardly ever cross. I do not know whether he is a good or a bad man. I do not know whether he is an honourable or a dishonourable man. I do not know whether he makes more errors of judgment than the rest of us or fewer. But the pursuit of him at one point certainly had the smell of scapegoat. From the media the smell wafted in of witch hunt. There has been more than a hint of hypocrisy during our discussion of these matters.

I do not agree with any of the motions. We are tending to allow ourselves to be carried along by what we think people are saying in response to media hype. I deplore the fact that we decided to spend an entire day debating the motion when we cannot have a day to debate Hong Kong, or eastern and even western Europe, or a whole list of domestic matters, including those near the heart of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

Mr. Flannery: Does the hon. Gentleman remember when he was out on a famous court case and we did not see him here for a month? Does he remember that, because we do?

Mr. Lawrence: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman is short-sighted. There has never been an occasion when I have been engaged in any criminal case when I have not been here at the conclusion of that day's business. I have often stayed here until one or two o'clock in the morning. As the hon. Gentleman does not walk around the areas where people work in this place he cannot be expected to have noticed that. There has been no day on which I have been here for less than five, six or seven hours. The hon. Gentleman could not talk more ridiculous rubbish.

To return to the matter which is really important—it would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman were to concentrate his mind on what we are debating and not on his pet illnesses—as a result of media hype, the public have come to the conclusion that, because my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester failed to declare certain interests, the Committee found that he had made money from that failure and that he obtained advantages for his clients. Both conclusions are wrong. The Select Committee on Members' Interests came to no such conclusion, as was clearly stated in the debate today. Nevertheless, that is the impression that so many constituents seemed to have formed.

I am anxious that we should not do anything in response to a wrong impression formed for reasons which I shall give. I cannot rid myself of the feeling shared by several hon. Members who have spoken that the intensity of the media vituperation against my hon. Friend has something to do with the fact that he introduced a Private Member's Bill last year to limit the freedom of the press to invade people's privacy—a Bill which the press bitterly opposed. I consider that a worrying matter for the future of Parliament.

To use this debate—personalised, as it is, to some extent—against my hon. Friend as an excuse for examining whether our rules on Members' interests are appropriate is, in my view, not called for. I am pleased that we are considering rather more the future procedure of the House and that more emphasis is being put on that than at first we thought. I do not like to think that we are using my hon. Friend's personal misfortune as a trigger for doing that. We should have done it anyway.

If we support the motion and return any verdict which is hurtful to my hon. Friend, we shall take an irreversible step towards the destruction of a parliamentary colleague. Such a step might be perfectly justifiable and in order if he had been convicted of armed robbery, rape, murder, large-scale fraud or child abuse in a court of law, but it would not be justifiable for the errors of judgment of which he has been found guilty.

Although the Committee on Members' Interests is not a court of law, outside this place it is perceived to be one. The dire consequences that will follow a decision adverse to my hon. Friend's interests will as assuredly follow as if this were a court of law. *[Interruption.]* We observe, do we

not, the milk of human kindness that flows from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery)? I believe that he was a teacher of children.

Mr. Flannery: I was indeed.

Mr. Lawrence: We should be thankful that the hon. Gentleman spends most of his time in the House and can no longer pollute those particular waters.

I wish to dwell on the wrongs of the matter. I refer to the absolute unfairness of the trial to which my hon. Friend was subjected for nine months by the Committee —a trial is what it turned out to be and it is perceived as such by the public. I do not blame any of those hon. Members who serve on the Committee. They were doing what they thought to be their duty as decent, honourable Members of the House, but everything got terribly out of hand.

The truth is that my hon. Friend has broken no law of the land. He has broken no rule of Parliament that we feel so strongly about as to make it obligatory to honour it.

Mr. Dalyell: I remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that at the beginning of the debate I asked the Leader of the House whether in his view the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) had broken any law. Why does the hon. and learned Gentleman think that the Leader of the House was so coy in his reply? Was it not a simple enough question to answer?

Mr. Lawrence: My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House answered the question in a most characteristic and endearing way. He said that since the Committee was not a court of law, the question was one which it never considered. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for underlining my point. He is being uncharitable to my right hon. and learned Friend, who certainly answered the question, albeit not as directly as the hon. Gentleman wished.

Before we take any action which condemns or makes matters worse for my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester we should consider this plain fact. Had he simply failed to register any interests, he would never have been subjected to nine months' misery and he would not now be subject to a motion which could help to destroy him. He has been tried by no court of law, yet the Committee sought to try him. The Committee has never previously tried anybody. It had no experience of trying people and no proper procedure for doing so. It lacks the most fundamental elements of a court of fair trial. I was amazed when my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said that it had breached no rules of natural justice. Whether intentionally or not, it was the worst type of kangaroo court, but the press have been noticeably silent about that.

What court of fair trial or natural justice allows judges who are politically apposed to the accused to sit in judgment? One of the judges in this case was the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I am sure that he will not mind me mentioning that he has tabled an early-day motion praising the prosecutor, Mr. Leigh, the journalist.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the hon. and learned Gentleman wishes to draw attention to these matters, will he point out to the House that the references to Mr. Leigh in my motion relate to *The Observer* newspaper controlled by Mr. "Tiny" Rowland and Mr. Leigh's valiant attempt to change the nature of that newspaper so that it was not unreasonably influenced by an overbearing proprietor? My motion has nothing to do with this affair. Why does the hon. and learned Gentleman not present his case properly instead of trying to discredit members of the Committee?

Mr. Lawrence: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman would not sit in judgment in a court of law over my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester when the primary prosecutor was someone whom the hon. Gentleman found praiseworthy. That is a rule of natural justice, yet the hon. Gentleman sat in judgment. The hon. Members for Workington and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) may be the most charming, gentlemanly and delightful colleagues in Parliament, but how many of my hon. Friends would like to be tried by them? How many of their hon. Friends would like to be tried by them?

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. To which hon. Member is the hon. and learned Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Lawrence: With either or both, how happy should I be. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Cryer.

Mr. Cryer: I know that all this is supposed to be terribly funny, but the Committee spent nine months meticulously and, I hope, fairly examining in detail the evidence presented under the rules which this House, not individual members of the Committee, had decided. The hon. and learned Gentleman is making a party political point. Does he accept that the majority on the Committee are Conservatives? When he traduces members of the Committee as he has been doing, he criticises members of his own party.

Mr. Lawrence: My point is that no court of natural justice has judges who are biased for whatever reason. I do not blame the hon. Gentleman for being biased against Conservatives. The strength of his feeling for Socialism is well known. No court of natural justice ever has judges who are so placed. I began by making nice comments about the hon. Member for Bradford, South, so he need not be——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I have not mentioned the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and I might not say such nice things.

Mr. Winnick: Do I understand the hon. and learned Gentleman to say that no Committee in any circumstances should look into the conduct of an hon. Member, as the Committee has done? If that is not his view, does he conclude that the Committee should be composed only of the political supporters of the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne)? The logic of his remarks is that Labour Members are so biased as to be incapable of reaching a proper conclusion.

Mr. Lawrence: The House must be careful how it judges hon. Members, and it is not doing so in accordance with

[Mr. Lawrence]

the rules of natural justice. Having judged them, we must not conclude what punishment should be inflicted if it is clear that, had they been tried in a court of law, they would have been acquitted.

Natural justice does not rely on documents which have been provided selectively by accusers—a journalist who has got them from a former, not very happy, wife. When the accused asks for other documents which would throw a different light on the picture, it is not natural justice for the Committee to refrain either from calling for them or from taking them into account before making its judgments. That is a breach of natural justice. The Committee is not a court of law and does not have to follow the rules of natural justice, but it must not punish or convict a man. That is my point.

What court of fair trail or natural justice does not allow or invite the accused to be present to hear or question his accusers? What such court does not allow him to put his case before he is questioned?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: There are so many errors in my hon. and learned Friend's speech that I should need to make another speech to put them right, but I hope that hon. Members who served on the Committee will have the chance to rebut them, as I believe that they can do effectively. I must ask my hon. and learned Friend to bear in mind that there is no question of our punishing or convicting my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). We did no such thing and it is for the House to decide. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester had every chance to produce any documents he darned well wanted to. My hon. and learned Friend will spoil the debate if he goes on. I can speak with my hand on my heart when I say that the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), whose reputations he tried to traduce a moment ago, and who were honourable members of that Committee, were totally bipartisan. No sign of political passion crept into the Committee to prejudice the case against my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester.

Mr. Lawrence: Of course I accept what my hon. Friend has said. I was not talking about any prejudice; I was talking about having judges who are known to be biased to the accused. I stand on that and on my assertion that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester was not allowed to be present when accusations were made against him, nor was he allowed to challenge his accusers.

Whether my hon. Friend was allowed to send in written documentation is neither here nor there. Parts of the report show that, if he had sent in such written documentation, he would not have been believed, because the Committee was not minded to believe all the written documents that he sent in. To say that my hon. Friend could have sent in written documentation is not equivalent to natural justice.

No court of trial or system of natural justice would have 13 judges, only three of whom attended all the sittings and heard all the evidence and only five of whom attended all but one of the sittings. A judge must hear all the evidence before coming to a conclusion. I am not criticising my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) as he was not sitting as a court of law, but we are being invited to punish my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, based upon the Committee's report, in such a way that someone who has not been tried in a court of law or according to the principles of law should not be punished.

It is not consistent with a court of fair trial or with natural justice for my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester to have been unable to call a witness—Mr. Chattington—who hopes to speak about a material incident. That witness wanted to be called, but he was not. Never mind why that happened: here was someone whom my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester wanted to assist his case.

What court of fair trial looks at a bundle of letters, eight years old, and comes to the conclusion—doubtless, rightly—that it looks suspiciously as though there was a contractual relationship between my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester and Mr. Chidiac? The Committee then heard my hon. Friend say that there was no such contractual relationship, however it looked. Mr. Chidiac also told the Committee that there was no such relationship; yet the Committee came to the conclusion that the suspicion was more cogent than the oral evidence heard from someone of good character.

The burden of proof should never have been on my hon. Friend—he should not have had to prove anything. Before we convict or punish anyone, the burden of proof must be on the prosecution. If one has suspicious documents and oral evidence——

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): He admitted it.

Mr. Lawrence: He has accepted the Committee's conclusion about not declaring his interest. He has not admitted any wrongdoing, and it would be wrong for my hon. Friend to draw that conclusion. That is no good in a court of law, but the Committee ended up as a court of law and now my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester is on trial.

What court of law and fair trial bases its verdict on a law which says in rule 11:

> "The purpose of this Register is to provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member of Parliament may receive which might be thought to affect his conduct as a Member of Parliament or influence his actions, speeches or vote in Parliament"?

An hon. Member does not have to sign that register and the rules are so imprecise as to be invalid as an instrument of judgment. To say in 1989 that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester should have applied the interpretation of that rule to events some eight years ago is not natural justice. That is borne out by what my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham told us. He said that the Committee had great difficulty about that and yet did not always resolve the matter in favour of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester.

I do not mean any offence to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which never set out to be a court of law or pretended to follow the rules of natural justice, but in practice it turned out to be a kangaroo court. It was unprepared for the task of doing justice to a colleague and we ended up with the justice of well-meaning amateurs.

Without observing the rules of natural justice, observing few of the rules of evidence, and without inquiring into matters that needed to be inquired into, the Committee produced two important criticisms. The first concerned the Saudi connection and the other the Chidiac connection. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester

has agreed that he should have declared an interest, but the errors made must be seen in perspective before anyone —the media, people outside or people in this place—takes any step to harm or crucify my hon. Friend.

For example, the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester put to the Prime Minister on the freezing of assets was a supplementary one and he could not possibly have known in advance that he would be called to ask it. He did not have to declare an interest for a supplementary question under any rule and it could not possibly have resulted in any advantage to him or to his client as Government policy is not changed by asking a supplementary question of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of all people.

Certainly my hon. Friend was not asked to ask that question, nor was any money received for that question. The Committee has accepted that. My hon. Friend did register his company, Falcon, and, as the Committee says:

"there is, of course, no general obligation to register clients and in our view there is no obligation to register income from abroad unless it might be thought to influence parliamentary conduct".

My hon. Friend told the Committee that it did not influence his parliamentary conduct and there is no evidence to suggest that it did.

Therefore, my hon. Friend's failure to register, although open to criticism on the grounds of common sense or good sense, apart from anything else, cannot be said to be all that grave an offence. People outside this place, however, think that he has done some terrible, heinous wrong.

On the failure of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester to register his interests in relation to Mr. Chidiac, it is best to refer to what is said in paragraph 99 of the Committee's report:

"In examining this complaint we were faced with a direct conflict of evidence and interpretation of that evidence. We regret that we have not been able entirely to get to the bottom of this matter. Although we might have been able to move closer to the whole truth if we had called additional witnesses . . . we have not been able to take oral evidence from Mr. Charles Chidiac . . . The complaint relates to events which took place some nine years ago: some of those persons we might have interviewed have died: some of the company records that might have shed an impartial light on certain of Mr. Browne's and Mr. Chidiac's actions have been destroyed or dispersed. It is tempting to leap to conclusions but we recognise that the information we have is incomplete and is likely to remain so. In the circumstances, we felt we should reach such conclusions as we could from the evidence available".

The conclusion it reached was a criticism and indictment of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. The statements in that paragraph demonstrate that a court of law, the decision of which would end in conviction and punishment, would not have reached the same conclusion as the Committee.

Those who understand the workings of Parliament will know that it is absurd to suppose that the non-disclosure of the name of a client would have had any effect on the answers given to questions, still less than the non-disclosure of a name would have had the slightest effect on Government policy or been of the slightest benefit to my hon. Friend. But we should be concerned about those who do not understand the working of Parliament and who might be forgiven for thinking that the failings of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester were significant and sinister. Our constituents often think that ordinary Members of Parliament have the executive power of Ministers but there is no excuse for Members of Parliament to believe that, still less for them to encourage that belief.

There is a catalogue of manifest injustices which have been perpetrated against my hon. Friend. I could have listed more. He is a parliamentary colleague who has been no worse than short on judgment, perhaps long on stupidity. We all feel immensely embarrassed about these matters and want to give them the greatest possible airing. However, it would be a great injustice for us to use my hon. Friend as a scapegoat to exorcise that embarrassment about our own vulnerability as a House of Commons to the criticism that our rules on Members' interests are inadequate. It would be still less fair to punish him as set out in the first motion, which states that we should suspend him for however short a period.

It would be equally unjust for us to be influenced by my hon. Friend's matrimonial problems and behaviour. They are no concern of this House. We should not be influenced by the way in which my hon. Friend carries out his responsibilities as Member of Parliament for Winchester. The people of Winchester may love or loathe him, but his future as Conservative Member of Parliament for Winchester should be entirely a matter for them and for him, but not for us. For what my hon. Friend has, or has not done, he has suffered immensely, as have his wife and family for nine months.

In the motion, although it does not follow the rules of a court of law or the normal rules of justice, let alone natural justice, we are being asked to punish my hon. Friend and to take a step that will lead to his destruction in public life. I will have none of it. I shall vote against the motions in this debate on the Register of Members' Interests and I hope that I shall be followed into the Lobby by a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House.

8.3 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I shall not attempt to follow the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who filibustered for more than half an hour and made an excellent case showing why this place should be run not on lawyers' principles, but, as happens, with "Erskine May" as a guide on which Members should operate.

I am glad that the name of Mr. David Leigh has been mentioned in this debate. It seemed as though we had missed out the major point as to who points the finger at people who make mistakes or come to this place to try to make money out of it. Often that is the most difficult part. There is no point in having a tougher system if it cannot be policed. All my hon. Friends, with the best of intentions, say that everything should be made much tougher, but there is then the problem who does the policing.

I had a very unfortunate experience when I was severely censured by the House in 1974 simply for defending the House at the time of the Poulson debate. I said that the number of Members who indulged in that sort of thing could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Fleet street immediately said, "Name the guilty five". After I had written an article in *Labour Weekly* and said it on the Jimmy Young show, Sir Harmar Nicholls, the then hon. Member for Peterborough, who had a majority of three

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after the February 1974 election, saw it as a marvellous opportunity to make some political capital and referred me to the Committee of Privileges.

I was hauled up in exactly the same way as the hon. Member for Winchester has been. We did not have a Select Committee on Members' Interests then, so I had to go before the Committee of Privileges. Everything that the hon. and learned Member for Burton has just said about taking evidence was absolutely true. One writes to the Committee, its members write back, and there is no cross-examination or proper *Hansard*. At the end, the Committee makes a pronouncement and the word goes out to grovel.

If hon. Members grovel and apologise, they will be let off with a caution and it will all be over in two or three weeks. I did not grovel because I knew that what I was saying was true. I put in a defiant defence, aided by a good friend, Arthur Davidson, the then hon. Member for Accrington, who was a libel lawyer. He helped me with my defence and put the cat among the pigeons because I said I could prove that there were Members of Parliament for hire. He put the Committee of Privileges into a hell of a dilemma because I had the information that I had collected.

One of the biggest scandals that went through the House happened in 1971 when a Bill that we all supported was brought in by a Conservative Government to let the Tote set up betting shops on high streets. The bookies had a fit because that would take hundreds of millions of pounds out of their takings. They fought the Bill tooth and nail and lobbied against it, and Committee Members, none of whom is in the House now, put down thousands of amendments. They were paid to filibuster and delay, and eventually they won.

The Tote never got to set up shops on high streets. The Bill never completed its Third Reading. It went through Committee but was quashed on Third Reading. It was a scandal, but it was never revealed to anybody. It was at a time, in the early 1970s, when Members of Parliament were badly paid. Free trips to Iceland were advertised on the Whip, declaring, "Take your wife and family for £10 and have a holiday while studying the effects of the Icelandic cold war."

Questions were tabled every day in Parliament about independent radio and which frequencies would be allocated to the new commercial radio stations. It was common knowledge around the House. There were stories going round that the banqueting rooms downstairs could be booked for public relations companies. They were paying £350 a time to book the banqueting rooms when Members of Parliament were getting about £80 a week.

When I was up before the Committee of Privileges trying to defend myself, I went to the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) because I wanted to see who booked those banqueting rooms, who paid for them and where the cash came from. I was told that I could not see them, even though I was trying to defend myself. Even today it is impossible to find out how much public relations companies pay to sponsor Members to book those rooms. There is a lot that still happens in this place which we do not know about but which we ought to know about.

The Register of Members' Interests came about because I wrote an article on the day that T. Dan Smith was sentenced, so it was no longer sub judice. It was like throwing petrol on fire. Every newspaper and television programme in the country hounded me. The people who were carrying on were all named, and all I had said was that they could be counted on one hand and in 99 per cent. of cases there was no problem. However, it was a mistake to say that.

At that time there was the famous incident of the coffee pot, when it was alleged that Tony Crosland, the then Secretary of State for Education, had received a silver Georgian coffee pot worth about £4,000 or £5,000. He was smart enough to have it valued at Sothebys where it was valued at £50. He was astute enough to do that, but the innuendos continued. Eventually, Ted Short was named as a friend of Mr. Poulson and Mr. T. Dan Smith. Mr. Short was Leader of the House at the time and he was angry.

We got into such a state with all these allegations that the Register of Members' Interests had to be set up because the average Member was in a Catch 22 situation. If they named names outside the House, they were done for libel, and if they did not name names they were done for contempt. An hon. Member could stand up in the House and say, "This is a breach of privilege, a contempt which libels us because it has been said that a handful of us are taking money." Therefore, we were caught both ways.

The innuendoes, stories and rumours continued. *Private Eye* printed stuff every week without naming names. It was clear that we had to have a Register of Members' Interests. I raised the matter in the parliamentary Labour party because Labour was then in office. I was accused between the February and October 1974 elections. I was pressurised to apologise and grovel by hon. Members on both sides of the House whose neighbours were earning cash in this way and who knew that the dirt would rub off on them. If the hon. Member for Little Twittering, North was accused, the hon. Member for Little Twittering, South also suffered. We were between two elections at the time, and I was severely pressurised to drop the matter and not to name names.

I agreed to drop the matter, provided that a register was set up. Eddie Milne also pressed hard for a register. He was sacked by his party and stood on his own in February 1974, winning by a majority of 66 which he could not hold in October 1974. Eddie Milne and I pressed hard in the parliamentary Labour party to have a register set up. One hot evening during the drought, at a packed meeting of the parliamentary Labour party, only one Member of Parliament spoke out strenuously against the register, and his name was John Stonehouse. He stormed out of the meeting, objecting that the idea was an unwarranted intrusion on privacy—and look what happened to him. He went to gaol for seven years after disappearing off the coast of Miami.

Perhaps there was an excuse in the early 1970s, because Members were badly paid then. We did not receive allowances for the cost of living in London, and many of us lived in scruffy bedsits at the back of Victoria station. We could not even afford a taxi home at night. We were very poor. That is no excuse, but the temptation was there. It no longer is. Members are well paid now, with good allowances. Members can afford proper flats, and to eat

properly in the Dining Room. No longer do we have to take every free lunch to save on expenses, and that is why we have to look again at the Committee of Privileges.

One or two hon. Members have talked about the star chamber effect, and that is what we are dealing with. The way in which the Select Committee on Members' Interests and the Privileges Committee operate is not right. One is asked whether one wants to give evidence verbally. Many of the Members who serve on these Committees are lawyers who can take the average hon. Member apart. We are always advised to write to the Committee, and letters are exchanged. The process drags on for months, and that is the whole intention—by then the issue has cooled off and eventually it can be kicked under the carpet. Every 10 or 20 years, however, we hold a debate such as this one. We cannot go on like this, but the problem is where to draw the line.

If we make Members register everything, must they register every free lunch? An hon. Member said earlier that we should investigate every complaint from members of the public. If the public knew that Members were having free lunches at the Savoy, as Members occasionally do, they would all complain, and rightly so. The Committee would sit non-stop. Should we draw the line at £5 or £50? If the latter, people would hand over £49·50.

We are not daft: there is no such thing as a free lunch —or free crumpet—for politicians. The public are not daft, and they know this. Free lunches are not handed out for nothing. I accept one in 20, and always because I have a specific interest. For instance, if the Football League invites me to its annual lunch, I go because I like football and I want to find out what is happening. The other 19 invitations go in the wastebin, although I usually reply politely to them.

We ought to know who is booking the banqueting rooms downstairs, and what they are paying for them. Is any hon. Member receiving a fee for hosting lunches in them? It is not just a matter of entering in the Register whether hon. Members are acting for public relations firms; we also need to know who the clients of these PR firms are.

The hon. Member for Winchester did wrong, but in my opinion he is a fool and an amateur. Nowadays the lobbying is done by professional lobbyists. Although they are supposed to register, and although they are inquired into, there should be a qualification for getting on the register. We should have an official, formal register of lobbyists who have been approved and who have deposited a substantial bond—perhaps £100,000—in, say, a Speaker's fund, which could be taken from them if they abused the rules of the House.

I am fed up with going to the bar for a pint of beer and not knowing who I am talking to. All sorts of strangers come up and talk to me. I do not know whether I am talking to the leader of Newcastle city council—I do not like to ask, because he thinks I should know—or to the political correspondent of *The Independent*, or to a lobbyist. There is a good case for saying that everyone should wear a badge. When we go to party conferences or a Government Department, we have to wear a badge identifying us as visitors and naming the organisations that send us there. It is time that visitors to the dining rooms and bars of this House wore badges identifying whom they represent and what they are doing in the building.

Lobbyists are often engaged by local councils and some of them are beyond reproach—for example, the lobby known as the Coalfield Communities Campaign, which gives us good briefings on subsidence and pit closures. That is an excellent organisation to which I do not object.

Then there are the surreptitious organisations, which are far more sophisticated now than they were in the early 1970s. I was telephoned by a film producer who wanted to make an advertisement showing the man who winds up Big Ben wearing a Timex watch. He asked me to arrange for this man to be filmed going downstairs and checking his watch before looking up at Big Ben.

Miss World used to tour this place. Stephen McAdden went around asking people to have lunch with her. That guaranteed Mecca pictures in the newspapers and publicity for the Miss World competition. I do not object to that, either, because the public knew about it.

We can never stop lobbying or money changing hands. It has gone on for hundreds of years, but the public, the local party, the voters and the media must know about it. If all these people know, we should not witness the sort of events that took place earlier this week in the Arthur Scargill case. Everything will be on the record, and if someone says he is in favour of something on television we should be able to know whether the organisation that he favours has contributed to his expenses—and that includes trade union officials. I—like all trade-union sponsored Members—always mention in my election address that I am sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen. If I did not, the NUR would ask me why I did not.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) made one of the most pompous speeches that I have heard in many years, and said not a word about the British School of Motoring giving £300,000 to the Liberal party two or three years ago—that was revealed to no one. The Liberals moved amendments to related Bills and still said nothing about that money.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is true that I and my colleagues have always accepted that parties should register where they get their money from. If there was such a rule, we would comply with it.

Mr. Ashton: The hon. Gentleman has virtually admitted what I said; he has certainly not denied it.

After I was censured by the House, there was nothing that I could do. The affair was very embarrassing to my constituency party, coming as it did just before an election. It left a stain on my character for ever. Three years later Maudling, Roberts and Cordle were proved not to have declared interests and to have been available for hire. The House censured them, and Cordle quit. I never received a pardon and nobody ever said that my character was quite clean. I never bothered asking for a pardon.

It is not easy to draw a line and say that a pound above that line must be declared. Also, it is not easy to police the measures that my hon. Friends seek. It means that somebody has to point the finger, and all hon. Members are reluctant to do that. I did not point the finger. I said that the place was clean and offenders could be counted on the fingers of one hand. None of us wants the opprobrium of being called a grass or a fink. I was accused of that by some of the people who were involved.

How do we find out unless some journalist or "World in Action" make it their business to find out? We have moved on from Members being paid or being asked. What

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did the Saudis get for their £88,000? Nobody has ever found out. We have moved on to a much more professional public relations lobbyist system, and it is in that context that we have to approach the problem. People must be made to pay a bond to register, and they must be prepared to be investigated and to be above suspicion. People must be told, "If you do anything inside this place that you do not reveal to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, we will take away your bond and your permission to come in here." If we do that, we will begin to clean it up.

8.22 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has spoken with commendable candour and realism about the whole question of lobbying. I hope to follow him, at least in the sense of being realistic in my assessment of the unhappy case that we are discussing.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House opened the debate with a quiet dignity that encapsulated the sombre judgment that we have to make on the unhappy situation with which the House, happily, is not that familiar. Make no mistake: this is a House of Commons judgment and we have to ring-fence it. One of the least happy aspects of the whole case has been the trial by tabloids of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) over past weeks and months. It has been done in a way that has made the Shropshire luminary Judge Jeffreys seem like a lilac social worker.

We have to accept a few salient points in this task of discriminating judgment. The first and most important is that mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester at the start of the debate when he accepted the findings of the Select Committee that there had been non-declaration in the instances that had been identified and the implied strictures that there had been a dereliction of responsibility under the resolutions of the House, and expressed regret. I appreciated that gesture and judgment on the part of my hon. Friend. It has made the conduct of the debate infinitely easier in circumstances that are disagreeable to us all.

I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and his Committee, because they had to carry out an immensely difficult task. I wholly endorse the confidence that my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden expressed in the members of his Committee. That is a relatively easy part of my speech, but I now enter much greater difficulty in trying to make the judgment that is implicit upon me, no less than on all other Members.

I come to the debate convinced that, whereas the resolution of the House mechanism might be tolerably effective for the gathering of information to compile the Register of Interests, it is a thoroughly unsatisfactory mechanism for conducting the investigation that has occupied the Committee over the past few months. I do not know whether we should use the analogy of a court, but to most of us it seems that, effectively, we are being asked to be a jury and pass a judgment in the light of its findings. Therefore, there is bound to be a legal analogy whether it is appropriate or not, and for the purposes of understanding our task, I think that it is appropriate.

I make that observation as if it is something that I have stumbled across in recent days, but practically every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate is conscious of the inadequacies of the procedures that were available to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden and his Committee in the discharge of their duty. That is also implicit in the second motion moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. It implies that the whole business needs further attention, to see whether we can improve upon our mechanisms and procedures.

To show my respect for the Committee I shall refer to paragraph 9 of its report. It says that the Select Committee did not

"provide any guidance as to the admissibility of evidence or the period of time over which complaints might be considered."

That was in the context of the most serious allegations relating to business activities in 1981 and 1982.

The House has heard speeches that have dwelt upon the difficulties of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester in not having the facilities that he would have had to argue his case in a legal framework before a court. One could make that observation from any point on the political spectrum, because this is truly a House of Commons matter and a judgment about the difficulties in which we find ourselves. It is against that thoroughly unsatisfactory background that I have to make a judgment and none of the proceedings helps me. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester has admitted that he did not declare his interests in the instances identified by the Committee. Therefore, there is no question of guilt or not, if I may use a rather heavily loaded word. The infringement—which is perhaps a better word—is admitted. It is not contested.

We have to judge the appropriate punishment for that degree of infringement, and here we would have been much advised if my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House could have given some insight about what he judged to have been the motive for the behaviour of my hon. Friend. Such an assessment from the Committee, if it had felt able to make it, would also have been useful, but I appreciate that its members did not feel that they were in a position to make these judgments. The judgment about motive is crucial before choosing any of the range of punishments presented to us on the Order Paper.

I do not understand the law through any formal education, but my sense of natural justice tells me that before we go for the heavier punishments there must be a clear and demonstrable proof of motive. There must be a demonstration that the assets registered were somehow or other handled in a more acceptable way than the assets and interests that were not registered. No attempt has been made to distinguish between the areas where my hon. Friend registered and those where he did not. One is perfectly entitled to assume that the same broad commercial and political judgment was exercised in both cases. That means that one comes back on any concept of natural justice to suppose that the matter was a consequence not of sinister or mendacious judgment, but of foolish and ill-judged behaviour.

That, I think, is not an over-generous judgment on my part. Indeed, any other judgment would prove to be unduly harsh and would not operate in any normal process of law. Therefore, I conclude this part of my few remarks by saying that, on due reflection, I shall vote for the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member

for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), which endorses and acknowledges what my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester said about his infringement of the House of Commons resolution governing the Register. Once one goes to a higher scale of judgment, one is judging motive, for which there is no adequate evidence.

The second motion, in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, captures the anxiety of the House that the present arrangements are unsatisfactory and need the further attention of hon. Members. Inevitably, and especially in the light of our own experience of this trial—if I may use that word—there will be a growing interest in using the normal legal processes and seeing whether what happens in local government could be a guide to our parliamentary actions.

Clearly, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was not enamoured of that possibility. I quite understand that the difficulties of finding an effective legal formula are immensely formidable—they have been considered by the House on previous occasions—but unless we proceed along the lines suggested by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), it will always be there as the tempting softer option never adequately considered by the House. So I welcome what my right hon. Friend said.

I hope that the further consideration that the House gives these matters will take into account how tangibly and effectively we may try to bring them within the ambit of the law rather than rely upon the present processes, which we have seen at some discount tonight. However, we should travel cautiously. I opened my remarks by picking up the realism of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, and I shall conclude in the same vein: in this sphere it is very easy to aspire, but damnably difficult to deliver.

8.32 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I should like, first, to make it clear that the Committee entered into this task, instructed by the House, with meticulous care and scrupulousness. All members of the Committee resented the implication—indeed, the expression—by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that, somehow, because of our political views, we were prejudiced against the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). I suspect that, in fact, because of political differences, we leaned over backwards to try to eradicate any shade of prejudice from the examination of the evidence that was presented, on which we were required to make a judgment for presentation to the House for its consideration.

I can say, without fear of contradiction by any member of the Committee, that the Committee meticulously, scrupulously and lengthily checked every assertion and cross-assertion made by those who gave evidence, including the hon. Member for Winchester, David Leigh, the complainant, and the other people who were brought into the ambit of the examination. The Committee had to spend a minimum of an extra 20 or 30 hours going over and over the ground, at the request of members, to make sure that it had not dealt unfairly with the hon. Gentleman. Therefore, any implication or expression, that the Committee entered into the debate on a partisan or shoddy basis, in any shape or form, would be completely and utterly untrue.

Indeed, in my case at any rate, it would also be deeply and bitterly resented. I did not want to do the job. That is not what I became a member of the Committee to do; I became a member because, as everybody knows, I am interested in commercial lobbying organisations here. This task just happened to be given to the Committee by the House of Commons. It is very interesting that in this House there is always the rubric that we are all hon. Members, yet every word of the hon. and learned Member for Burton suggested that, in the conduct of our affairs, we were dishonourable Members. I resent that. The hon. Gentleman might at least have given the members of the Committee the same credit as he attempted to give the hon. Member for Winchester.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) suggested that we should have a framework of legislation and recourse to the courts. That would be a detailed framework, and it would shrug off from this House the obligation to examine any case in which a complaint had been made about a Member. I suggest that that would be a very much harsher regime, as this House tends to deal in a very kindly fashion with Members that it feels have transgressed in any way. It does so by going over the information in the most scrupulous way.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that some kind of apology is required from the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who clearly made the point—the whole House heard it—that my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), because of political bias, were simply incapable of doing properly their job on Committee? In those circumstances, does not the hon. and learned Member for Burton consider it appropriate to make an apology?

Mr. Cryer: I am not interested in securing an apology from anybody; I simply want to set the record absolutely straight. I suspect the brutality of exchanges from some Members, particularly when they are based on a completely incorrect examination and understanding of the work that the Committee did. I just want to put the record absolutely straight lest anyone here tonight should think that there was any validity in some of the accusations—indeed, all of the accusations—of the hon. and learned Member for Burton.

Mr. Lawrence: I am not surprised that neither the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) nor the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was listening to my speech. I do not expect them to listen to me. I most certainly did not say that anybody, from whatever party, on the Committee was dishonourable. I said—and I am grateful for the opportunity to make the point again—that when one comes to consider who one's judges should be, one cannot expect, in a court of law, to have sitting in judgment somebody who may at some time in his life have manifested some bias against one, for whatever reason. That is precisely what natural justice means. If a judge has a difference of approach, whether political, legal, or of any other kind, the normal procedure is for that judge not to sit.

Mr. Cryer: If one were to work on the basis of the sort of sympathies that the hon. and learned Member for Burton was trying to assess—and on every occasion on which the Committee sat there was a large majority of

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Conservative Members—it could just as easily be concluded that the Committee was prejudiced overwhelmingly in favour of the hon. Member for Winchester. As a matter of fact, I do not take that view. My view is that all the Committee's members, of whatever political persuasion, including the Liberal Member, tried as objectively as possible—as objectively as any member of the judiciary, and, bearing in mind the strangeness of some members of the judiciary, a good deal more so—to examine the matter impartially, in some cases leaning over backwards to make sure that the accusations that some felt would be forthcoming could not, in any legitimate way, be sustained.

Given that the Committee concluded that the omissions to register interests were serious in two instances and that in others the recommendation was that no action should be taken, I believe that 20 days' suspension, including the unprecedented withholding of salary, matches to some degree the seriousness of the omissions, but I would have made a longer suspension incumbent. If the House is to make a serious issue of the obligation of registration, it must be seen to do something.

I share the concern about the removal of constituents' representation in this place. Expulsion would not be part of my consideration and I would vote against it. As many have said, that is a matter for the constituents of the Member concerned and not for us. There are some disagreeable precedents where a Parliament has tried to make a judgment on a Member's membership.

A Member who is suspended has a mark of disapproval from Parliament which can be taken into account by his or her constituents. The Member can still carry out his or her duties to a degree—he or she can still see Ministers and other Members as well as constituents. The constituents are not deprived entirely of the services of their Member. That being so, it seems to me that Parliament has to make some mark of its disapproval of the breach of the rules of this place.

There is the argument that the rules are not especially clear and cannot be followed easily. I remind hon. Members that we introduce rules for ordinary citizens of a complexity and length which would baffle every hon. Member. I am not talking about sums such as £50,000, which many millions of our fellow citizens would regard as a dream. Many people regard sums of that sort as unrealisable. We tell those who are making claims of £40, £45 or £50 a week that they must supply information of intricate detail—and woe betide them if they fail to provide the information which the forms request. For example, housing benefit is often only £10 or £12 a week. Given the large sums that the Select Committee was called upon to discuss, it might regard £10 or £12 a week as paltry. In many terms such sums are paltry, but for so many of our fellow citizens housing benefit is a lifeline in their struggle and scrape each week for existence.

We in this place do not say that we can overlook any lapse on the part of those outside who fail to give the information that is required of them. We do not say, "Well, they are difficult rules. If you do not provide the information, we shall shrug our shoulders, let it go by and say that it should not happen again."

There should not be double standards. It seems that there is one standard for Members of this place: we are prepared to say of them that there could have been an oversight. There is another standard, however, for those outside this place for whom we legislate and for whom we provide scrupulous rules. We are all aware of the statutory instruments and delegated legislation that we produce for the social security system. The pile stands at least a foot high. The legislation is designed to ensure that every penny that is paid is properly expended and that there is no cheating. If we do that for our fellow citizens outside this place, the same standards can reasonably be expected to be operated in this place. But that is not the position.

We formulate rules that have no criminal penalties attached to them, and this is the only place in the country that provides criminal sanctions. We have decided that we shall not apply criminal penalties to ourselves, but we apply them to people outside. If we introduce modest rules that must be followed and we find that there are transgressions, surely we must demonstrate that we do not have double standards—one standard for us and another for those outside.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that taxpayers' money was involved in the matters that we are considering?

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman is right to make it clear that taxpayers' money was not involved. We have provided, however, that money from whatever source must be subject to a declaration. The position is the same whether money is taken from the public purse for a training school which is run by an hon. Member or whether there is payment by the Saudi Arabian Government, for example. We say that there must be a declaration. Although my parallel is not absolutely apt —the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) was right to take up the issue of taxpayers' money, and I do not grumble about that—it is valid when it comes to the rules, in the application of which we have been generous.

I shall remind the hon. Member for Isle of Wight how the rules came to be introduced. There was pressure from within the House. When I was first elected to this place in 1974, the first question that I tabled was about the registration of Members' interests. I told my constituents that I wanted to see a register established. A senior Labour Member came to me and said, "Don't worry, old boy, we know the wrong'uns in here. We can pick them out. We do not need a register. In any event, a register will never come to pass."

In fact, it came to pass because this place was brought into disrepute by the Poulson scandal, which erupted throughout the nation. The nation's response was to say, "Parliament must do something about this." We cannot lurch from crisis to crisis every 15 to 20 years when evidence of corruption comes to light, only to say, "We must tighten the rules." Once we establish rules, we must be certain that we apply them properly and consistently. that must be the mark of integrity and honesty of this place.

Mr. Benn: The parallel that deals with the question of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) is that if an office of profit under the British Crown disqualifies, an office of profit under the Saudi Arabian crown should similarly disqualify. That is the question that the House must consider.

Mr. Cryer: My right hon. Friend makes an interesting comment, as always.

There is another example of double standards. It is an illustration that may interest the hon. Member for Isle of Wight. We have fairly sloppy rules about the declaration of Members' interests, but we tell councillors that they must observe tight rules. How did those rules arise? They came into being when the House was propelled to produce the Register of Members' Interests. That was the result of the Poulson scandal, the tentacles of which spread to virtually every local authority. Parliament said that local authorities should be subject to tight rules, but we introduced fairly generous rules for ourselves. That was not right.

Members of the public are elected to local authorities for a variety of reasons. Some seek election because they think, wrongly, that election will add to their prestige. Most people, whatever their party view, want to do well by their fellow citizens. Surely it is wrong that those who set out with the best of intentions should have placed upon them obligations which we have chosen to shrug off when it comes to the first test of our rules. We say that there are other and better ways of proceeding. There may be, but we set up the rules. At the first hurdle we are talking about a new inquiry. We say that the procedures are inadequate, along with the Select Committee itself, and that we cannot and should not do anything.

I think that we can and should do something. At the very least we should exhibit our concern as a House for what I regard as a deliberate and mendacious failure to register. I accept that that is not the view of the Committee. The Committee left the matter open, although there are implications of concern in the report. Given the nature of the Committee and the way in which it constructed and compiled the report, I believe that there should be a suspension. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) put down his amendment.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Is it not right that under the present rules an hon. Member is entitled either to register his interests or to decline to do so? Therefore, is it not fatuous for the House, whatever else it has done, to say, "You failed to do what you did not have to do"?

Mr. Cryer: That is the Powell argument, and that has gone by. In any case, it is not true to suppose that, if a Member failed to register, he would not be in the position that we are discussing. If there had been a complaint about a business interest of the Member, the fact that he had failed to register would not have prevented the Select Committee from having an investigation and reporting the matter to the House for debate. So that is completely erroneous.

I do not want to go into detail, but at the beginning the hon. Gentleman was asked whether he had a conscientious objection to registration and he made it clear that he had not. So the whole question of the Powell position is not relevant to the debate.

Failure to act may be delayed until pressure builds up, but it will bring the House into disrepute. We are concerned about people outside. I think that they want hon. Members to follow at least some portion of the standards that we expect of them. Therefore, I support the main proposal of the Leader of the House.

The registration of commercial lobbying organisations has been raised. I have mentioned the Poulson affair several times. When it broke, the Government of the day set up a Royal Commission, chaired by Lord Salmon, to report on standards of conduct in public life. The report has never been debated, which is a serious omission by the House. It made one recommendation for Members of Parliament which has been shrugged off. No crisis has erupted, so we have been able to put it to one side. The Royal Commission recommended that bribery of a Member of Parliament should be made a criminal offence. It is not. That is something we should remedy.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, for many years I have been putting forward a private Member's Bill to register commercial lobbying organisations so that we can keep track of what they do. We should give the House of Commons Commission power to draw up guidelines so that, if the rules are breached, they can be thrown out. My Bill would implement a recommendation made as long ago as 1976. People outside would then see that we did not have double standards and that we had just one standard of justice—rules to be followed by everyone. That would be the fairest way of dealing with the problem.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Most of the hon. Gentlemen who have risen have been here throughout the debate. I should like to be able to call them all. May I ask for brief contributions, perhaps 10 minutes or even less?

8.53 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I rise with great trepidation, partly because a cold has robbed me of part of my voice and partly because, as many hon. Members have said, it is easy in a debate like this to sound sanctimonious or trite. However, I am so disturbed by some of the issues that I feel compelled to speak, new as I am to the House.

The first point which disturbs me was eloquently covered by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who said that there was a growing cry of corruption levelled at the House of Commons. I do not believe that that is justified, but that is not the point—we have to take seriously the fact that the cry is being heard, and we have to nip it in the bud. I want to speak up because I have heard the cry before.

I was in local government before I came to the House and I know what happened there following the Poulson scandal. I assure all hon. Members that it was no fun chairing a planning committee, as I did, after that scandal. I did not enjoy being criticised publicly because my wife, my children and I continued to swim in the swimming pool of my next-door neighbour, who happened to be a developer. That is the level to which it went. I sense that the same may happen here in the near future if we are not careful. My constituent, my hon. and learned Friend, the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), said that he smelled a whiff of a search for a scapegoat. So do I.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) observed that we are all being tarred with the same brush. I suspect that all of us who have canvassed have had the same accusation levelled at us, irrespective of party. There is guilt by association if we do nothing. The ultimate result, so eloquently expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), may be over-reaction and an invasion of privacy.

[Mr. David Wilshire]

It would be absurd, but I would be interested if someone could tell me the relevance of my registering my one share in Bristol City football club. There are those who would go that far. What I saw in local government when there was over-reaction was a loss of many good people who cared about the community and who wished to serve, but who found that the pressures were too great, and left.

I also saw a lowering of public esteem due to guilt by association. I believe that the loss of people from local government and the lowering of public esteem had a great deal to do with the problems now facing local government, so heaven help us if Parliament loses its special place in the minds of the public. That is why I believe that the matter is important and why we have to act now.

When, at 10 o'clock, we all have to decide how to act, we have to resolve a dilemma. How do we send the correct signal to the public at large about the conduct of the House, while at the same time making sure that justice is done to an individual colleague? If democracy is to survive, the public have a right to expect us to set an example by all of us being above reproach. If we are to go on insisting that Edmund Burke was right and that we are here not as mere voting machines on behalf of our party but as individuals to use our judgment, and to be sound and independent in our decisions, we must not only be seen to be sound and independent—we must be able to prove it. The conclusion that I draw from the report is that our procedures do not make it easy for us to prove that we are independent and sound in our judgment.

It is in that context that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester in making an admission about errors of judgment, leaves us with an important matter on which we must act and which we cannot duck. It follows that if somebody stands here, as my hon. Friend did today, and apologises for an error of judgment, we can no longer say that we can safely ignore that report. We must do something. If the facts in that report and its conclusions are correct, we must all make it crystal clear to the country that we expect the highest standards from all of us.

That leads me to the other part of my dilemma. Who in this place should decide whether the facts and the conclusions are correct? The more I have thought about that before the debate and while I have been sitting here since 4 o'clock, the less clear I have become about who should take that decision. I have reached a stage where I am sure now about just one thing—the full House is most certainly not the right place to take some of the decisions being put before us.

Why do I believe that? Surely a cornerstone of democratic justice in any country is that the politicians who write the rules must not be responsible for enforcing them or for interpreting them, lest we become judge and jury in our own cause, and that is to undermine democracy.

Who are the right people? It depends what sort of matter we are facing. Are we discussing criminal wrongdoing, political wrongdoing, moral wrongdoing or perhaps just the one thing that has been admitted—the making of an error of judgment?

If we wish to pursue the question of criminal wrongdoing, the answer is simple. The House should send the report to the Director of Public Prosecutions. We could then step back and let him get on with it. That is the only way in which criminality can be dealt with in a matter of this sort.

On the other hand, if we wish to say that there may be some element of political wrongdoing in all of this, we should again simply step back and say that it is for the selectors and electors of Winchester to take action, not for the House.

If we wish to pursue the notion of moral wrongdoing, we must take great care that we do not seek to turn the House into a court of morals. I see moral judgments as a matter for every individual in Britain, not just 650 of them. It is not for the House to reach a collective moral judgment about a colleague or anyone else. All that we can do today is to act as individuals, reach our own individual conclusion and make that conclusion public. That is as far as an individual can go in making moral judgments of this sort.

Where does that leave me? It leaves me wanting to uphold the high standards of the House so that we do not bring it into disrepute. I want to leave any further discussion of criminality for the Director of Public Prosecutions and to leave any further consideration of political action to the selectors and electors of Winchester.

What am I then left with? I am left with an admission of an error of judgment and with a growing feeling, which other hon. Members have also expressed, that the rules that we have here are not clear enough. I conclude that those are the only things on which we dare take action —an admission of an error of judgment and an admission that our rules need looking at.

In those circumstances, the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) requesting the Speaker to express our displeasure is as far as we dare go on the matter. I equally believe that we should accept the proposal from the Leader of the House that the rules of this place should be tightened up. I shall therefore be voting accordingly on both motions.

9.3 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It is not the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) who is on trial today—it is the ethics of the House of Commons. I say that purely because of the experience of many hon. Members on both sides of the House in local government. Local government never finds itself in the one-off situation of effectively trying one of its own members in its own council chamber. That is because the rules are clear, tight and, as many hon. Members have pointed out—from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Bitten)—the rules are enshrined in law. Whether the House reaches a decision today or on another occasion, that is how the matter will ultimately be resolved.

In looking at an individual Member tonight, we are looking at a symptom rather than the cause of the problems that have beset the Select Committee on Members' Interests for the past year, during part of which time I was a member of that Committee.

The hon. Member for Winchester finds himself in the present position because we do not know the interests that all hon. Members have. Any person who puts himself or herself in the firing line by seeking to represent the local population in Parliament takes on many responsibilities.

Interests cannot be hidden. Indeed, to a large degree we give up our privacy. There is no separation between our public and private lives. We are on trial all the time.

That becomes obvious when we start pretending that there is a division between what we seek to do as individuals in terms of making money and what we do in our political lives here. That is why I have reservations about the concept of something being a House of Commons matter. There is no such thing that is neutral and above the political fray, be it crude party politics or the wider politics that we practise in Parliament.

Political party and policy issues are at stake today. We on the Opposition Benches should state clearly that a Labour Government would act differently in relation to the Register of Members' Interests. In saying that, I leave aside the case that is in our minds today. We would take a different view from that of the present Government towards the register. Labour Members can express opinions on behalf of a wider public, who expect more from their Members of Parliament in this era of television and radio.

The public should know exactly what the Members they elect get up to. We must concentrate on prevention rather than cure. Rather than one of our number being dragged through the extremely invidious experience that the hon. Member for Winchester is undergoing, there should be clear ground rules to prevent such a case from ever reaching this point, which means total disclosure.

My view on that was made clear in the amendment which stands in my name but which, sadly, was not selected. Many of the ideas contained in it are not new. They are common currency in France, America, Canada and Australia. Legislatures elsewhere in the world take such principles in their stride. We could learn from the best practices of those legislatures and create a really effective register here so that all hon. Members are clear where their duty lies before coming to Parliament and while they are here. There would then be no errors of judgment.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—God bless him—drew attention to some of my proposals. For example, I believe in full-time Members. I find that there are never enough hours in the week to enable me properly to do my one job here, let alone service other organisations, companies, directorships and consultancies outside. I see no reason why all directorships and consultancies, and the remuneration therefrom, should not be declared openly in the Register of Members' Interests. The clients of consultancies should also be listed, and the remuneration therefrom, so that it could never be said, "You are getting money underhandedly because of your activities in the House of Commons," through parliamentary questions, comments in the Chamber or whatever.

All shareholdings and dealings should be listed. The present Register means that a Member could sell all his or her shares on one day, register the next day as having no shareholdings and then buy back the same shares or others the day after. That would accord with the concept of the Register.

Mr. Rooker: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Allen: If my hon. Friend will allow me to continue——

Mr. Rooker: That is absolutely wrong. My hon. Friend must appreciate that any change in the circumstances does not outweigh the details published in the Register, because it is updated daily. There is a requirement that if there is a change of circumstances it must be registered at the time. My hon. Friend must get the record right. Let us not do ourselves down more than we need to.

Mr. Allen: Without checking for myself, I will take my hon. Friend's intervention at its face value and I am glad to do so.

I believe that the Register should include hon. Members who are involved with Lloyd's syndicates, and that the entries should provide the public with clear information about whether and to what extent hon. and right hon. Members have benefited personally from any legislation with which they were involved. There have been a number of cases where hon. Members have gone on to benefit—for example, when voting for a privatisation. Minister who, on appointment, divert shareholdings into trusts should be required to declare those shareholdings and to identify any relatives with a beneficial interest in such a trust.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield has amplified in his amendment, which has been selected, the fact that the Representation of the People Act should be amended so that people who become parliamentary candidates understand that they will have to make a full and total declaration of their shareholdings and all their interests and that failure to do so would be in breach of a rule of the House and in breach of the law of the land. They would thus disqualify themselves from Parliament without any intervention from some kangaroo court which might be constituted in this place. I believe that the Act will have to be amended in that way sooner or later.

I was particularly interested in the concept of the well-rounded Member of Parliament—the idea that poor people such as myself, who work here full time, do not have the necessary depth of personality and that it would do us a lot of good to have a couple of directorships in the city, or perhaps to spend five or six hours a day in the law courts to give us a better view of the world.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme) *rose*——

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend may intervene if she wishes.

Ideally, Members of Parliament should take up this position of honour and trust as full-time employment. The House deserves nothing less, and the electors whom we are here to represent deserve nothing less. That day will come—and the sooner the better.

9.13 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): It is all very well to say that this is not a trial, but it is. We are the High Court of Parliament and we are trying my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) whether we like to say so or not.

I do not wish to appear on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. I am not willing to judge whether his admissions or his follies were right or wrong.

As someone who believes in the concept of justice, and in the House of Commons, I am horrified that we should adopt a procedure whose nature is contrary to justice. We have set up a Committee because of what in Scotland would be called a clype—[HON. MEMBERS: "A clype?"] English Members may not have such a good word. A clype is someone who tells tales.

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

The Committee was set up with no judicial form and no rules according to natural justice under which a Member of the House could be indicted. My hon. Friend was not indicted on any particular charge, nor was he entitled to call witnesses: what members of a democratic society would regard as justice did not obtain. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) should not laugh; these are serious matters—principles of justice on which the House depends.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: It is not true that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) could not call witnesses; he could.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: We all respect the Chairman of the Committee, but that Committee has none of the characteristics of natural justice. The Leader of the House knows what they are.

What I find so upsetting and disturbing is that the House should suddenly be in a position which, according to the traditions of British justice, should never arise: the jury is being allowed to decide on the sentence. Someone who has been accused of nothing has been found "prospectively" guilty of certain offences, but we have not decided what they are. We know that they are not criminal; we do not know whether they are ethical or moral, but they are supposed to be unconstitutional.

I find this difficult to understand. Let me say to the Leader of the House, entirely seriously, that although we are apparently supposed to declare our interest, we do not need to do so. How can a Committee without the principles of natural justice find someone guilty of not declaring an interest that the House that has found him guilty says he does not need to declare in any case? I find that an extraordinary concept.

Here we all are. Some members of the jury are out, and some are in. The jury is being asked to say what the sentence should be, but the jury was not even in court. Most of its members who are in court now have not read the report, and do not conceive of the rights or wrongs of what the Committee found.

Whatever the party of the accused, what I find offensive and appalling is that the House of Commons, the High Court of Parliament, should be fussing about saying, "The jury has 100 sentences that we have thought up." The Leader of the House has thought of 20. Others have talked about an honourable discharge and yet others have talked about a forfeit. I find that offensive to all concepts of justice and decency.

The concept of a jury is absurd in this instance—some are here and some are not; some have gone—some have returned; some have listened; some have not, but they will have to vote—on this and that—in one Lobby or another—and pronounce a sentence. Are we going to give out the message tonight that that is the concept of justice of the House of Commons? Are we going to say that that is our attitude to the duty and rectitude of law, equity and judgment? If we are, the House is not performing its duty or doing itself any credit.

Nobody wants to believe more than myself that hon. Members are respected and behave with rectitude and honour. However, if we make this place into an absurd circus of magic justice in which nothing of the principle of natural justice survives, we cannot say to ourselves or to the public, "Hurrah—we have broken the boil. We have shown that wrong will be righted." We cannot do that.

From tonight we should have a Register of Members' Interests that is simple and sensible. We should ensure that we have a code of honour that we all understand, so that if we break it, we know that that is what we are doing. Let us not sit as a fatuous jury—some gone, some here—and pretend that we are doing justice in the name of the honour of the House. Let us say, "The man has done wrong. He has admitted that he has done wrong." Let us say, "We all accept that fact," and then, like Burns, let us say,

"The unco' guid should not stand in judgment, lest they be judged."

Tonight's procedure will be foolish if we do not understand that this partial jury should not exercise the concept of punishment.

9.23 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Unlike both the hon. and learned Members for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), I do not regard this as a court room. When the Government introduced their anti-trade union legislation, I wish that Conservative Members had been equally worried about the rights of workers on the factory floor who do not have the defence of a lawyer. Although, as a result of that legislation, some of those workers could be sacked on the spot, I did not then hear any pleas on their behalf from those hon. and learned Members.

There has been a breach of discipline; the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) has been good enough to admit that. Our credibility with the public would be in serious jeopardy if we did not opt for some type of suspension. For that reason, I am prepared to go along the road that the Leader of the House has asked us to follow.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the hon. Member for Winchester. His greatest punishment is not the suspension that we might give him but the fact that his business has been discussed from about 5 pm until 10 pm tonight. He has apologised. He has done wrong and he must be accountable, but I have some sympathy for him.

As a family man, I know that our wives and families do not choose that we go into public life. Even in the good times, they often have to put up with the ridicule of neighbours and sometimes so-called friends. I should like to put it on the record that I have a great deal of sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's wife and family in view of what they must be going through and must have already been through.

I do not wish to quarrel with my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), but he said that the Register of Members' Interests was full of items declared by both Labour and Conservative Members. He mentioned the fact that we declare our sponsorship by trade unions. I should not like any member of the public or the press to go away with the idea that union sponsorship and business interests are one and the same thing. They are not. I do not gain any financial benefit whatever from being sponsored by Manufacturing Science Finance. There is a great difference between that and hon. Members who take upon themselves jobs which pay £8,000 and sometimes £10,000 per annum into their personal accounts. It would be wrong for anyone to make that comparison.

The Leader of the House also fell into that trap when he said that the House would be an empty place if we did not have jobs outside. I left school at 15 and went straight into engineering. I had a spell as a trade union officer and a spell as a councillor. I can draw on that experience, and I have done so ever since I came into the House. I defy anyone to say that I am a worse Member of Parliament because I have no other pecuniary interests. That is nonsense.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) cited the example of members of the 1945 Government. He could not have picked a worse example. The 1945 Government consisted of men who spent six years in the forces and knew what life was all about. They had travelled and had had to make decisions on the spot. They brought their experiences into the House and gave the House the best Government that we have ever known in the history of Parliament.

I am not a great traveller with Select Committees but I have been on some Select Committee trips. There is an hon. Member in the Chamber tonight who went with me on a Select Committee trip to the far east. I was deeply embarrassed by the behaviour of some hon. Members on that trip. They would walk up to guests and Government representatives and say, "Here is my House of Commons card and here is my business card. I am into this business, that business and the next business." I have witnessed Select Committee Clerks of the House being deeply embarrassed because they knew that hon. Members were seeking information, not for the purpose of their work here in the House, but for the benefit of their outside interests.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martin: No, I shall not give way. The hon. and learned Gentleman spoke for a long time. I shall not be long, but I have been here all day.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Two minutes.

Mr. Martin: My hon. Friend tells me that I have two minutes. I wish that she had said that to other hon. Members who have spoken.

Clerks of the House and Officers working in the Library have been deeply embarrassed when they have had to give information to Members knowing full well that it is not for the benefit of the House.

I am sorry that we had to have a disciplinary hearing to discuss these matters. I hope that the Leader of the House will return with a motion so that we can talk, not about disciplinary action but about the uses to which hon. Members put the catering, Library and research facilities of the House. If hon. Members are honest, they will say that it is wrong to take money for their own benefit from outside organisations. They know full well that they are damaging the reputation of the House by doing so.

9.29 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wholly spoilt the atmosphere of the debate by his partisan comments.

As a junior Member of the House, I decided to speak because I believe that the media have hounded my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) for a considerable time. I share that experience. Twelve years ago, a national newspaper wrote an article on the Economic League which involved the company in which I worked at that time, and it mentioned me. It was recently regurgitated in the Hogarth press and now by the National Council for Civil Liberties, and so it goes on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) mentioned political wrongdoing. The NCCL does not look into the affairs of the Isle of Wight where the Liberal Democrats deposed school governors because they were Conservative. It does not look into how they hound Freemasons from council chambers.

Bernard Ingham was right to say to the press that today the media will not allow the facts to interfere with a good story. This week *The Guardian* carried on its front page an article which stated that Conservative councillors on the Isle of Wight would resign. That was wholly without foundation. It was the Liberal Democrats who said that they would resign if they were community charge capped. That is a good example of journalists deciding not to allow facts to interfere with a good story.

I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said about outside interests, but I do not entirely agree with his remedy. The remedy of not being heard in the Chamber should be used by the House only for those who ignore either your authority, Mr. Speaker, or the rules of debate. To exclude my hon. Friend from the Chamber for breaking a rule of the House is not a proper use of the sanction. That is wrong. The House is the crucible for freedom of speech. If we infringe the rules, it should be a matter of note and investigation, which in this case it has been. Then it is up to the people to make a decision at the ballot box because they send us here. We should use lightly our right of excluding Members from the Chamber. We have the right of freedom of speech and we should deny it only to an hon. Member who disrupts the workings of the Chamber.

In my maiden speech I referred to one of your predecessors, Mr. Speaker, who had to vacate the Chair because of financial misdoings. He represented Isle of Wight. That shows that these matters are hardly new to the House. Unusually, I am in complete agreement with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who said that the House would be much poorer if hon. Members did not have financial interests, although he almost lost me when he started to defend accountants. He is absolutely right in saying that the House is the richer for that. Labour Members may be lecturers or shop stewards; Tory Members may be lawyers and continue to practise. It rarely occurs to the House that the lifeblood of the nation is business, trade and commerce. That need must be represented properly in this House.

Sometimes the House gets into that sanctimonious mode of the lady in Belgravia who looks straight down her nose and says, "Ew goodness, he's in trade, is he?" Great Britain Ltd. and Great Britain plc must trade at a profit. The House must reflect a trading nation.

It is improper to refer to events that occurred eight years ago. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) that the people will be the final arbiters in this matter. I shall vote against the motion because I believe that my hon. Friend the Member

[Mr. Barry Field]

for Winchester, having been sent here by his constituents, should continue to be heard in this House. The man who never made a mistake never made anything.

9.35 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before asking the Lord President four concise questions, I wish him well when he goes to Brazil next week on our behalf in the hope that he can help them do something about the rain forests.

Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman clarify the question about the precints of the House? Those of us who have been suspended have been politely, courteously but firmly escorted by the Serjeant at Arms—sword and all—to ensure that we get out of the precincts. The police keep a kindly eye on us to ensure that we do not come back to our rooms by a circuitous route. Would similar actions be taken in regard to what we are discussing today, or is it different if one says certain things about the Prime Minister?

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Member of Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) rightly asked about the Salmon committee. Paragraph 311 of that committee's report states:

"Membership of Parliament is a great honour and carries with it a special duty to maintain the highest standards of probity, and this duty has almost invariably been strictly observed. Nevertheless in view of our report as a whole"—

a considered and serious report—

"and especially in the light of the points set out . . . we recommend that Parliament should consider bringing corruption, bribery and attempted bribery of a Member of Parliament acting in his Parliamentary capacity within the ambit of criminal law. Our recommendation is limited to this single point, and we do not raise any questions about other aspects of Parliamentary privilege and related matters."

Could we have the Government's view on the considered recommendation of the Salmon committee?

My third question arises out of personal experience, because I was reprimanded in distressing circumstances in 1967. Let no one pretend that those who are reprimanded by this House do not carry the scars for a long time. I plead with colleagues, however, to go extremely carefully down that road. When I went before the Select Committee on Privileges, I was asked an amalgam of questions, which were confusing and sometimes irrelevant. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who was there, was very nice about it; he may recollect the occasion. We had better be clear what such parliamentary investigations are about and are sparked off by what they purport to be about.

I do not think that we would be discussing this subject today had it not been for press reference to the matrimonial problems of the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and, whatever else we are, we are a jolly bad matrimonial court. Moreover, had he not produced a totally unacceptable private Member's Bill, we would not be debating this matter today.

In my case, it was made clear some years after the matter that it did not involve security, chemical and biological weapons or any formula of that kind, or even about giving Lawrence Marks details of a Select Committee report which had been printed and which the Ministry of Defence knew very well did not contain anything that would damage our country. The late Sir Harry Legge-Bourke rather shamefacedly told me some years later that he had been approached by people in the Ministry of Defence who thought that I had been asking inconvenient questions on Anglo-French variable geometry aircraft, Aldabra atoll and my Government's east of Suez policy, and they now had a chance to "get me" on a technicality.

We must be sure that we do not set up a system in which hon. Members can be "got at" for whatever reason, irrelevant to what the matter is supposed to be about. Therefore, I go along with those who would have liked the hon. Member for Winchester to be able to cross-question and confront those who were accusing him, as in a court of law. There is no substitute for that. I think that I am right in saying that the hon. Member never had the opportunity to cross-question his accusers. As every lawyer knows, it does not do merely to say that he could submit written evidence.

Frankly, amendment (d) which stands in my name, is in one sense tongue in cheek but it makes a serious point. If we are to have a six-hour debate on behaviour, let us discuss the behaviour of certain bigger fish in the House. Behaviour extends in all sorts of different ways, and doing that for which I would be suspended for five days were I indelicate enough to mention it, is also a matter of behaviour. We must strike some sort of balance.

9.42 pm

Dr. Cunningham: By leave of the House, I have been asked by a number of hon. Members to clarify what I said earlier. I thought that what I had said was quite clear, but I am more than happy briefly to reiterate my position.

I congratulate the Leader of the House—I omitted to do so earlier—on the wide consultations that he has undertaken before bringing any motion to the House. In principle, I support the proposals of the Leader of the House and I shall vote for the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) to be temporarily suspended from the House. I shall vote for the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), and if that amendment is not carried, I shall certainly support the substantive motion in the name of the Leader of the House.

I said, absolutely without equivocation, that I thought that motions to dismiss the hon. Member for Winchester from the House would not gain my support. However, it seems abundantly clear—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has strong feelings about matters of discipline—that there is little point in having a Register of Members' Interests if the House does not move to have that Register's provisions enforced and upheld. The Select Committee unanimously recommended to the House that we should take action on this matter.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*—

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way.

I have no difference of opinion with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), but I believe that sponsorship by a trade union in the House—I am sponsored by the GMB and have been as long as I have been a Member—does not bring me significant financial gain. However, it is a considerable material benefit to me and brings considerable financial support to my constituency party, election expenses and other people's salaries. To suggest that that is not a financial

interest seems wrong. I have always declared it in those terms. In the Register I am said to have financial benefit from it. That is the honest way to describe matters.

I am not suggesting for a moment that financial sponsorship by trade unions enriches Labour Members of Parliament or adds to their bank balances, but there is no denying that it is of major significance.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: There is a big difference between a constituency party receiving £600 to spend as it pleases, and some hon. Members putting the proceeds from six or seven consultancies into their personal bank accounts.

Dr. Cunningham: Of course there is a quantitative difference, but we are discussing issues of principle to do with Members' financial interests, and I cannot deny that sponsorship by a trade union is a financial interest.

I hope that these remarks have clarified my position. I welcome the motion tabled by the Leader of the House. I shall vote for it, but first I shall vote for the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr.

9.47 pm

Sir Geoffrey Howe: With the leave of the House, I want to respond first, lest I forget, to the message transmission asked of me by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I shall try to think of him throughout my time in Brazil.

Turning to more serious issues, I believe that there has been a great deal of common ground in this long debate. On both sides of the House there has been a great understanding of the anguish faced by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), not excluding the point made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow—that there is no justice about where the lightning strikes in terms of publicity.

There has been wide admiration for and acknowlegment of my hon. Friend's apology. The House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for reminding us of the case for sympathy with my hon. Friend's wife and family.

On the other hand, there has been equally widespread recognition of the importance of upholding the proprieties that we have been discussing throughout the day, graphically expressed in different ways by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). Both had a clear insight into the dangers with which we have been concerned. Out of all that, a great deal of common ground has emerged.

First, there has been real concern about the need to be above reproach, as far as we can be, in relation to conflicts of interest. Secondly, there is recognition of the formidable difficulties of definition and judgment to which the Select Committee was invited to address itself. Thirdly, and perhaps most strikingly, on both sides of the House there has been real anxiety about the procedural problems of trying to reconcile the best efforts of my hon. Friend the Member Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and his Committee with the requirements of natural justice—including the issue of limitation raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton). My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) have identified the need to try to refine and improve the procedures for investigation of matters of this kind.

In response, I say only that no one should underestimate the immense difficulties of designing an alternative procedure which will comply to the full extent required with the rules of natural justice. We must take great care not to have too high expectations in that respect.

The House will be glad that the Select Committee is ready to study both subjects referred to it by my second motion. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden recognised the need, as did the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, to pay special attention to the problem of lobbyists, but not in the direction of any relaxation of our guard in that respect. My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham emphasised that there was a considerable job of policing to be done.

When the Committee addresses itself to that, I hope that it will take account of the warning uttered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) against inclining too much in the direction of too much law. Those of us who heard the speech by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) were not surprised to hear him utter what was, in effect, a reductio ad adsurdum of the legal position with a touching but terrifying faith in the capability of the legal process.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): My right hon. and learned Friend has just referred to the significant speech by our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Did he hear him recommend that the apology by our hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) should be taken as enough? Given the revision of the rules that my right hon. and learned Friend recommends, would it not be advisable to leave aside the question of more precise penalties and follow the advice of our right hon. Friend and leave this matter to the electors of Winchester?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It was because I heard clearly the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup that I intend to deal with that matter at the appropriate time in my speech. Perhaps I may conclude my observations on the second motion. The House will welcome the fact that the Select Committee intends to address itself to these matters.

The first motion raises the question of what penalty, if any, would be appropriate in this case. Effectively, there is a choice between the recommendation in my motion of a suspension of 20 days and the recommendation in the motion standing in the name of my hon. Friends the Members for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) which suggests that there should be no suspension at all.

The answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow—I should like to have the hon. Gentleman's attention—is that Members ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order No. 42 or suspended under Standing Order No. 43 must withdraw forthwith from the precincts of the House. A Member suspended from the service of the House on a motion not made pursuant to that Standing Order is not excluded from the precincts of the House unless the order for suspension expressly provides for that. That is the

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

distinction. Remuneration is not withdrawn except in consequence of a special order of the kind that I propose here.

The choice lies between two alternatives. I emphasise that the choice should be made upon the basis of the candid acceptance by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester of the finding of the Select Committee. The House was impressed by that acceptance, and that is an important point of knowledge because it overcomes the anxieties of hon. Members about the procedures. Those procedures are far from ideal. They are to be examined but, as some hon. Members have said, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester has nevertheless candidly acknowledged the shortcomings that were alleged against him. That is the basis upon which we have to decide what to do.

What are we addressing? Are we addressing ourselves to a matter of criminal law? The answer is most certainly not. Are we addressing ourselves to a matter of political judgment? Again the answer is most certainly no. That distinction was clearly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne. We are addressing a question of impropriety in a professional respect in relation to the standards that the House seeks to set for hon. Members of all parties. That is a perfectly familiar concept which should not be dismissed because it does not fall into any of the other categories.

In my days at the Bar—now long ago—I spent many weeks appearing before the General Medical Council, the General Dental Council and other professional bodies. Professionals were invited, in proceedings short of an ordinary law court but nevertheless operating under the rules of natural justice to pass judgment on their peers. That is what we are expected to do in this case and there is nothing intrinsically wrong in that.

How are we to choose between the two penalties that I have identified? It is argued that a suspension of one month is insubstantial and, according to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), no more than a slap on the wrist. The same point was made rather sanctimoniously by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

On the other hand, it is said—this point was made strongly by a number of my hon. Friends, and certainly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—that the very fact of conviction, the exposure and anguish of the months that have gone by, and the jeopardy to a wider career represent sufficient punishment already for my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. We have been urged and invited—quite properly—by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside to take account, in every respect, of the record of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Before the Leader of the House mentions my name, which is one of those in which the amendment stands, may I say that I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) said. As the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, our most important task is to represent our constituents. We are elected by our constituents, and we are called honourable. I did not think that my hon. Friend for Winchester, whose apology was otherwise admirable, considered his constituents. Therefore, I shall not support my own amendment tonight.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making his position clear in that respect. Nevertheless, I think that I should address myself, as I was doing, to the argument that has been supported by his co-sponsor.

I was dealing with the intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside, which was criticised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup in regarding that as quite unjustified. It is perfectly proper for this House to take account of the record of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, but the question remains—to what judgment are we to come? The dilemma was identified most correctly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North, and I shall close my remarks by returning to that question. I put the question before the House not in any sense as a prosecutor —*[Interruption.]* I should like to have the attention of the House while I try to focus on exactly what that question is.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North asked what was the motive which led my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester to act as he did. Was it an inadvertent oversight, or was it a conscious and acknowledged misjudgment? That is one way of putting it. My right hon. Friend complained that that had not been precisely found by the Select Committee.

That may be the position, but the question was also rightly put from a different point of view by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), when he asked what judgment on that question is consistent with our duty of ascertaining the seriousness of our view about the importance that we should attach to the rules that we formulate. That is one approach that we have to have in our minds as we try to answer the questions posed by my right hon. Friend.

The best that I can do, in inviting the House to look at that matter, is simply to remind hon. Members of the terms in which the Select Committee dealt with the two allegations that it upheld. Those terms are to some extent enlightening. In paragraph 65 of its report the Committee says:

> "We consider that Mr. Browne should have declared both the client relationship and the foreign payment. A substantial payment from a foreign Government to a Member, or to a company controlled by a Member, is precisely the kind of interest for which the rule was framed. Such a payment is at least as likely to influence a Member's conduct as a sponsored visit. If such payments are excluded, it is difficult to see what benefits (other than an occasional Gold Watch given to a member of a Parliamentary delegation) category 7 would cover. We therefore uphold the complaint."

Those are the terms in which the Committee deals with that matter. In respect of the second matter it says:

> "We believe that Mr. Browne's assistance in approaching contractors and in writing to Ministers appreciably enhanced Mr. Chidiac's chances in playing a role in arranging contracts any of which would have given him a substantial commission. In our view it is beyond reasonable doubt that Mr. Browne had in effect a 'client' relationship with Mr. Charles Chidiac, founded on the Selco East retainer of £2,400 per annum (although, in fact, only £1,600 appears to have been paid) which influenced his parliamentary actions and conduct . . . and which should have been declared on the Register. We uphold this part of the complaint."

It is entirely a question for the House to decide as to what insight that offers into these conjoined questions—the scale and nature of the misconduct acknowledged by

my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, and the conclusion at which we should arrive in determining what judgment is proper in asserting the importance that we attach to the rules that have been commended by Members on both sides of the House. For my part, I stand by the terms of the motion, but I am content to leave the matter to the House.

Amendment proposed: (a), to leave out from 'Winchester' to end of the Question.—*[Mr. Colvin.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 67, Noes 237.

Division No. 107] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ashby, David
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stam'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dover, Den
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Gardiner, George
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Madel, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shersby, Michael
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Ayes:
Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Mr. Patrick Cormack.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benyon, W.
Blair, Tony
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McFall, John
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pendry, Tom
Portillo, Michael
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*

Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Turner, Dennis
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Battle and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed to put at that hour by the Order [6 March].*

Amendment proposed: (b), to leave out from 'Winchester' to end of the Question and add

'and that Mr. Speaker do reprimand Mr. John Browne for his failure on a number of occasions to register, or where appropriate to declare, his pecuniary interests as required by the Resolutions of the House of 22nd May 1974 and 12th June 1975.'.—*[Mr. Benn.]*

Question, That the amendment be made, *put and negatived.*

Amendment proposed: (c), to leave out from 'accordingly' to end of the Question and add

'calls upon him to resign as a Member of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Corbyn.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 33, Noes 254.

Division No. 108] **[10.10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Canavan, Dennis
Cox, Tom
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Gordon, Mildred
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blair, Tony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clelland, David
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Haynes, Frank
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Price, Sir David
Radice, Giles

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Shersby and
Mr. Kenneth Hind.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: (d), to leave out '20 sitting days' and insert 'three months'.—*[Mr. Rooker.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 111, Noes 189.

Division No. 109] **[10.26 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Ewing and
Mr. Allan Rogers.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Galloway, George
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael

Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Mr. Graham Riddick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House

(i) agrees with the Report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests (HC 135); and

(ii) endorses the findings of the Committee in respect of the specific allegations against the honourable Member for Winchester and accordingly suspends him from the service of this House for a period of 20 sitting days and suspends his salary as a Member for that period.

Mr. Speaker: We now come to motion No. 2. Thereafter, I shall put the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House requests the Select Committee on Members' Interests to study and report further on the questions raised by its Report (HC 135) relating to:

(i) the definition of outside interests and the enforcement of obligations in relation to declarations of outside interests by honourable Members; and

(ii) the procedures whereby complaints may be brought before the Select Committee and whereby the Select Committee investigates such complaints;

together with such other questions as might appear to it to arise therefrom.—*[Sir Geoffrey Howe.]*

Amendment proposed: (b), to leave out from '(HC 135)' to end of the Question and add

'and prepare draft legislation that will:

(1) identify the responsibilities which honourable Members owe to the electors in respect of their pecuniary interests;

(2) provide for the disqualification from membership of the House of certain offices of profit, which though not held under the Crown, may because of their nature be incompatible with membership of the House, such offices to be added to list of disqualifying offices under the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975;

(3) provide for the extend of disclosure of other relevant pecuniary interests and for the publication thereof;

(4) provide for the preparation of a Register of all enterprises which have been established for the purpose of influencing ministerial, or parliamentary, decision by lobbying in support of external interests;

(5) lay down rules, where appropriate, for declarations of interests by those who hold official passes to the House of Commons;

(6) provide for the application, interpretation and enforcement of this legislation;

and to report progress by the end of this session.'.—*[Mr. Benn.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 87, Noes 194.

Division No. 110] **[10.39 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ashton, Joe
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Graham Allen and
Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert

Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
Major, Rt Hon John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Teresa Gorman and
Mr. Graham Riddick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House requests the Select Committee on Members' Interests to study and report further on the questions raised by its Report (HC 135) relating to:

(i) the definition of outside interests and the enforcement of obligations in relation to declarations of outside interests by honourable Members; and

(ii) the procedures whereby complaints may be brought before the Select Committee and whereby the Select Committee investigates such complaints;

together with such other questions as might appear to it to arise therefrom.

Tax System

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.51 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the administration of the tax system. There can be no doubt that in many, perhaps most, respects, the administration of the tax system has improved out of all recognition since 1979.

First, and most important, income tax rates have been cut at all levels, while the yield has risen. In 1979, the standard rate of income tax was 33 per cent.; today it is 25 per cent. While the rate has been cut by nearly a quarter, the yield has risen by nearly 10 per cent.

When the top rates of tax were 83 per cent. and 98 per cent. on earned and unearned income respectively, the incentive to avoid tax could hardly have been greater. A great deal of time and energy was spent by some bright people in the late 1970s devising tax avoidance schemes. Rossminster, although best known for such schemes, was only the tip of a large iceberg.

Secondly, income tax has been further simplified by the introduction of relief at source for mortgage interest, and by the extension of tax deduction at source to bank as well as building society interest. That means that millions of PAYE taxpayers have a tax coding that consists solely of a personal allowance, and do not need to complete a tax return each year.

Furthermore, as well as the welcome reduction in tax rates, allowances for alimony, forestry and deeds of covenants to individuals have largely been abolished, resulting in simplification in those areas.

Thirdly, Inland Revenue staff numbers have fallen. In 1978, there were 85,000 staff. In 1989, there were 68,000. It is worth noting, however, that in 1960, there were only 56,000 and in 1950, 50,000.

Fourthly, receipts per Inland Revenue employee have increased considerably in the past 10 years from about £1·1 million in 1980 to about £1·6 million in 1989. Those changes have occurred at a time when the number of schedule E taxpayers has grown substantially to nearly 30 million in the current year and when the number of self-employed has grown even more rapidly to more than 2·5 million.

As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am well aware of and welcome the improved efficiency of the Inland Revenue. The Revenue probably publishes more information about its management planning, its budgetary and management information systems, its application of information technology and its work measurement than any other Government Department.

The most recent annual report of the Revenue contains five paragraphs entitled, "Reducing the Burden on Business". It explains that the best administrative procedures simplify the job for everyone—for taxpayers, businesses and the Department. It says that proposals for new legislation or changes to existing policies are all assessed for their likely compliance costs for business. The aim is to assess and where possible to quantify the effect on compliance costs for businesses and other taxpayers whenever the Revenue advises Ministers on policy issues. The report also refers to the annual programme of reviews of existing regulations introduced in 1988 to complement the systematic compliance cost assessments for new proposals.

As part of that programme, the Inland Revenue undertook a review of PAYE communications with employers. Other recommendations from efficiency scrutinies deal with the construction industry tax deduction scheme and schedule D procedures. All those improvements in the administration of the tax system are most welcome.

However, I believe that the time has come for a much wider review. It should start with the aims and objectives of the Inland Revenue. The 1986 public expenditure White Paper listed 10 factors that are considered when proposals for changes in direct taxation are being evaluated. The sixth was the effect of the proposals on increasing or reducing the complexity of the tax system. The eighth was the compliance burden on employers, businesses and other taxpayers.

In the 1990 White Paper, those 10 factors are reduced to five. There is no reference to the effect of proposals on the complexity of the tax system, but the fact is that the tax system is becoming more and more complex each year. The volume of tax legislation is growing at an alarming rate.

In the 10 years from 1980 to 1989, there have been 12 Finance Acts. Between them they contained 1,335 sections and 200 schedules, and they took up 2,185 pages. The Finance Act 1989 was the largest in history. It has 188 sections and 16 schedules and it runs to 275 pages.

There are two reasons why that volume of legislation is unacceptably high. The first relates to the costs that it inevitably imposes on the Inland Revenue and on taxpayers. The second relates to the burden that it places on the House of Commons. I want to deal with each of those reasons in turn.

There is now an overwhelming acceptance within the business community and, I am sure, the Inland Revenue, that our tax system is needlessly diverting an increasing number of highly trained personnel within the accountancy and legal professions, not to mention people building up and running businesses of all kinds, from work of far more importance to the nation. The complexity of tax legislation is undoubtedly one of the main reasons why the Inland Revenue is continually losing expensively trained staff to the private sector. I am convinced that the resources of the Revenue could be used far more effectively —for example, in pursuit of the black economy and in the development of various specialist units.

A further result of fiscal complexity is that many statutory provisions and judicial dicta are in practice overlooked because of the sheer impossibility of tax practitioners and the Inland Revenue being aware of everything in the statutes, statutory instruments, statements of practice, extra-statutory concessions and other Revenue pronouncements.

So the complexity of our tax legislation ties up a lot of talented people who could be put to more productive use, and it brings the law into disrepute, since it cannot be fully enforced. For those reasons, I believe that simplification should be given much greater political priority. I am sorry that it has been dropped as a consideration from the 1990 public expenditure White Paper, and I hope that it will be reinstated. Of course, I understand that Ministers have other important priorities when considering the contents of a Finance Bill, but I firmly believe that simplification

should be moved up the agenda. Last year's Finance Bill was the largest and probably the most complex in history. I hope that this year's Bill, which will follow my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget on Tuesday week, will not set a new record.

I recognise that if simplification is to be given greater emphasis, the case must first be made that the present system is damaging. As I have said, it creates inefficiencies, and results in the misallocation of scarce and highly trained resources. We now need a full inquiry into the matter. I hesitate to recommend a royal commission as I know that that would not find favour: I simply point out that it is nearly 40 years since the last full inquiry, which was a royal commission, into our system of taxation.

It may be that such an inquiry would conclude that the only realistic way in which we can simplify tax legislation is by abolishing taxes. The abolition of capital gains tax would certainly be most effective in that respect. The inquiry should examine all the options, but it should have relatively narrow terms of reference. It should not be asked to conduct a comprehensive review of United Kingdom taxation, but should be invited to focus on the volume and complexity of tax legislation, and to assess the cost to the Inland Revenue and compliance costs to taxpayers. It should be asked to examine the growth of tax advice as a source of business for accountants and solicitors and to estimate the cost to the nation of that waste of talented resources. It should take into account the cost to the taxpayer of the constant poaching of Inland Revenue staff and should look at all the options for simplifying tax legislation and make recommendations. The Inland Revenue, taxpayers and their advisers should be represented on such an inquiry and it should have an independent chairman.

Secondly, I shall deal with House of Commons procedure and consider briefly the burden that a Finance Bill of the size and complexity of that produced last year places on hon. Members. This is, of course, an old chestnut. As long ago as 1978, when he was shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. and learned Friend, now the Leader of the House, argued in his Addington speech for the introduction of a technical tax Bill.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is familiar with the argument. It is that most of the clauses in the annual Finance Bill are wholly technical. Those that are political—for example, changes in tax rates and allowances and the introduction of new tax reliefs—are relatively few. Lumping them all into a Bill which is not published until five months of the parliamentary year have already elapsed, means that parliamentary scrutiny is inevitably rushed and inevitably focused on the political elements.

I do not seek to denigrate the efforts of those who serve on the Standing Committee. They do the best they can in the circumstances, but I was responsible when I worked for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales for the preparation of our annual submission on the Finance Bill. It was always the most unbelievable rush. We had to allow each of our 90,000 members the opportunity to comment, but we had to finalise our submission within two or three weeks of publication of the Bill if it was to have any influence at all either on Treasury Ministers or on members of the Committee.

It is true that in recent years the Treasury has done more to consult interested parties about prospective tax changes. That is obviously a most welcome development. How much better it would be if a technical Finance Bill could be published at the beginning of each Session. Ample time could then be given for representations to be made and for proper consideration in Committee.

I appreciate that Treasury Ministers dislike the prospect of two Finance Bills every year, and that they like to save everything up and put it in the Budget. But the Budget is about fiscal policy, that is to say, total tax revenue and total borrowing or debt repayment, not about the minutiae of taxation. Many of the matters that take up most room in the subsequent Finance Bill do not even rate a mention in the Budget Statement. I am sorry, therefore, that my right hon. and learned Friend dropped the idea of a technical tax Bill as soon as he became Chancellor. No doubt the Inland Revenue persuaded him of its impracticability, but one way or another we have to try to avoid the situation that arose last year.

Philip Hardman, senior tax partner of Grant Thornton, to whom I pay tribute for the tenacity with which he has pursued the cause of tax simplification, has written about last year's Finance Bill:

> "Certain battles need not have been fought. If the Government had sought the views of experienced tax practitioners beforehand, we would not have seen the close investment company legislation crawling out of the ashes of the apportionment legislation only to be squashed to death by the tanks of the accountancy and legal professions."

I am sure that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will refer to the abolition of development land tax and investment income surcharge and to other improvements. I went out of my way at the beginning of my speech to acknowledge the many changes for the better that have been introduced since 1979. The fact remains, however, that Finance Bills have been getting bigger and bigger and more and more complex. Philip Hardman tells me that parts of our tax legislation are ignored—by accident, not design—as they are too complex. This is a serious situation, which merits urgent consideration. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree to set up the inquiry that I have suggested.

11.4 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for his success in securing this debate and for the unparalleled expertise that he brings to this subject; it is unrivalled among Members of this House. I share his worry about the length and complexity of tax legislation. I suppose that I should declare an interest in this subject. No one has a greater interest than I have in ensuring that legislation is kept as simple as possible so that my little brain can understand it, and as brief as possible so that my time on the Finance Bill is minimised.

Inevitably it is something of a perplexity to a party whose members are of our disposition to understand how a Government committed to the minimum of laws find themselves, none the less, producing a great number of taxation laws. I have looked into the matter, and I can tell the House that there is a number of reasons for this. Undoubtedly they do not explain everything, but I think that they should be borne in mind when this problem is being considered.

Even simplification takes Finance Bill space. In the last Finance Bill—my hon. Friend will understand why I take the last one rather than the forthcoming one—we introduced a measure to simplify schedule E receipts. It

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

took 11 pages, but we now have a simpler law. Even abolition takes Finance Bill space. As my hon. Friend mentioned, we abolished much of the legislation affecting close companies. There were 20 pages on the statute book. It took eight pages to repeal and, in so far as it was necessary, replace that legislation.

Another of our objectives is to make legislation more user-friendly. This results in its being longer. For example, in simplifying the schedule E matters to which I have referred, we have used the modern and, I hope, more user-friendly approach. The draftsmen deliberately sought to help practitioners and others who need to refer to the legislation by making it self-contained. Legislation by reference would have been shorter, but it would also have been less convenient for those who have to understand and apply the new rules. That is why we had to go to 11 pages. I hope that in doing so we simplified the legislation in a way that practitioners welcome.

The structural reform to which my hon. Friend paid tribute is essentially a process of reducing rates and reducing the number of allowances and reliefs so that the tax burden is spread more widely. Inevitably that has involved some major tax reforms over our period in office—sometimes comprehensively replacing a whole mass of legislation by a new structure which it is felt is less onerous but which requires a great deal of legislation. In the last Finance Bill, for instance, we carried out the major part of the reform of life assurance taxation, reducing the rate and spreading it over a wider tax base. That itself took quite a sizeable chunk of space —10 pages, plus a couple of schedules, with more to come.

Inevitably, if one is reducing the rate and spreading it more widely, one wants also to stop tax avoidance. If some people avoid paying tax, others have to pay more. Therefore, there is a dollop of tax avoidance measures to try to keep up with the amazing ingenuity and fertility of mind of those in the profession who perhaps are over-assiduous in seeking to minimise the tax burden on their clients. In the last Finance Bill, 28 pages fell roughly under that heading.

If we are to keep the tax system up to date and in a form which is usable and relevant to practitioners and the ultimate clients of practitioners, we must modernise constantly to take into account the changing and increasingly sophisticated environment in which we live. There were about 18 pages in the previous Finance Bill on adapting the tax system to deal with deep discount bonds. They were welcomed largely by the practitioners in the City because they met a more complex situation which did not exist before those financial vehicles had been invented and developed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield mentioned the possibility of a major inquiry into various aspects of the tax system which concern him. I understand his concern, and I shall think deeply about it as I study what he said this evening. I remind him, however, that we had a major inquiry under Lord Keith into compliance with taxation. We consulted extensively and major parts of the report have already been implemented. About 30 pages of the previous Finance Bill—it was probably the largest single item in the Bill —were used to implement some of the recommendations resulting from the Keith commission. There has been a major investigation resulting in major legislative reforms. Perhaps the reforms need time to bed down before we take up those matters again.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield is aware of a non-governmental inquiry into the tax system that has been carried out by Professor Sandford of Bath university, with the help and active co-operation of both Customs and Excise and the Revenue. A measure has been attempted of the burdens of compliance on industry and business, and there is no escaping the fact that they are onerous. Professor Sandford pays tribute, however, to the United Kingdom and its tax authorities. In his opinion, they are clearly ahead of the rest of the world in taking into account the compliance burdens—on this account, my hon. Friend paid tribute to the tax authorities—that tax law inevitably imposes.

We can see how far we are ahead of some countries when we compare our legislation—it embraces direct taxes and secondary legislation and has reached the giddy heights of 3,700 pages—with that of the United States, which extends to nearly 10,000 pages of direct legislation and regulation. We can claim that we have kept our legislation more continent than that of some of our competitors internationally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield mentioned the possibility of a technical Finance Bill which would break the present Finance Bill into two parts and, he argued, permit more consultation. We consult, and we are in the habit increasingly of publishing draft clauses. Last year we published draft clauses in respect of the European Court of Justice ruling on VAT on property, which I proudly referred to as my green budget—no one took the blindest bit of notice —in February 1989. It is quite common for us to consult in depth with the active participants of industries which are organised enough to participate. That is the case when we are involved in reforms such as those of life assurance and those affecting the oil industry.

Two Bills might well conflict with the desire for less legislation rather than more. I know that that is not the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield, but such is the nature of this place that if we had two Bills passing through the House I cannot believe that it would result in less than half as many pages in each measure. Each would tend to be an opportunity for insiders and outsiders to add to the initiatives which we already had.

Although the organisations of accountants and so on share my hon. Friend's concern about the burden of taxation, they are not slow to come forward with suggestions. For the coming Budget we have had from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales 12 proposals, from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland 24 proposals, from the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants 76 proposals, from the Law Society of England and Wales 30 proposals, from the Law Society of Scotland 33 proposals and from the Law Society of Northern Ireland, commendably, a modest one. If they were given two bites at the cherry annually, those numbers would be unlikely to diminish. Although we do not satisfy them all, inevitably they put ideas in our mind.

My hon. Friend has highlighted a serious matter, to which the Government attach the highest importance.

They will constantly strive to simplify and lighten the burden which the tax system imposes on practitioners and on industry. I shall consider my hon. Friend's proposal for an inquiry or commission to study the matter. Obviously, if that idea bears fruit, he will hear more about it in due course. I am grateful to him for bringing the subject to the attention of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 8 March 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 15 March.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February].

That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 15 March.

TEES AND HARTLEPOOL PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 15 March at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: As the remaining 14 Bills set down for Second Reading are the subject of blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall take them together.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 15 March.

ADELPHI ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [29 February],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 15 March.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

PENZANCE SOUTH PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*

SHARD BRIDGE BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

HUMBERSIDE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CLYDE PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES (No. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 15 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Poultry

1. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the present state of the poultry industry.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): The market for poultrymeat remains firm and producer prices for eggs are at a very high level.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Minister agree that it is extremely difficult for consumers to identify British eggs among imported eggs? Is he satisfied with the arrangements for the marking of British eggs? What is he doing about imported eggs that do not meet the same standards as British eggs in respect of salmonella, for example? British producers have suffered greatly as a result of the impositions that have been placed upon them.

Mr. Curry: The British Egg Industry Council is conducting a programme to mark individual small packs of eggs, which is legal. There would be nothing to stop us marking packs of eggs with regional characteristics, for example. We cannot mark individual eggs. I am advised that when that was done in the past, it tended to denote that the product was not absolutely fresh. There is not a good case for that form of marking in marketing terms.

As for imports, we have discovered only eight incidents of infection in over 500 consignments that have been tested over the past 10 or 11 months. There is not a high enough incidence to justify the taking of emergency action, even if that were not to be illegal. I believe that the British consumer knows that he or she is well advised to purchase eggs that have the best guarantee of having gone through vigorous testing procedures.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: I know that my hon. Friend is anxious to ensure that the poultry industry is not disadvantaged. Is he aware that there is substantial concern in the poultry trade that the British producer may be disadvantaged because of the different standards of hygiene that are being applied in the United Kingdom and the European Community? What steps has he taken to ensure that there are uniform standards of hygiene in operation throughout the Common Market?

Mr. Curry: I accept my hon. Friend's point. The industry is concerned, although it is co-operating well with the measures that we have introduced. We are seeking to obtain from the Community proposals that will be on the table by May. The proposals will set down a programme for achieving standards across the Community that are equivalent to those that prevail in the United Kingdom. We may not necessarily have to reproduce in every detail what we are doing. We shall be looking for something that

gives just as strong a guarantee to the housewife, and which will be applicable and enforced throughout the Community.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister accept that it is grossly unfair that British egg producers have to produce eggs that conform to high standards while other egg producers are allowed to import contaminated eggs that are sold to the British consumer? The hon. Gentleman has conceded for the first time that there is a possible course of action. Will he invoke clause 36 of the treaty of Rome and hold up at the port of entry the contaminated eggs until imported eggs have been found to be clear?

Mr. Curry: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is categorically no, because he is wrong on all counts. First, the action that he suggests would be illegal. At a time when we are lecturing the rest of the Community on legal behaviour, we can hardly engage in illegal actions ourselves. Secondly, the level of infection is not enough to justify such action. Thirdly, the correct course of action is to obtain a sensible and enforceable EEC-wide standard that protects all the housewives in the Community.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is no good having common regulations if they are not enforced equally, and until that happens, will Her Majesty's Government consider putting a mandatory notice on imported eggs that are not subject to the same safety standards, to the effect that they have not been produced in accordance with British regulations on consumer safety?

Mr. Curry: No. That would be illegal. We would not contemplate that course, but my hon. Friend is right to say that we must ensure that whatever is agreed is enforced, and we shall pay particular attention to that when we come to the negotiations.

Sheep

2. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the present state of the sheep industry.

Mr. Curry: The United Kingdom sheep industry remains well placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new sheepmeat regime, as the increasing level of our exports demonstrates.

Mr. Howells: When will the Minister make a decision about the ending of the sheep variable premium in Great Britain, or will the scheme operate for the next two years or so?

Mr. Curry: We shall shortly consult the industry on that. The advantage of an earlier ending of the scheme is that we would move to the Community system, which would rapidly benefit our exports. At the same time, we must bear it in mind that the buoyant French market is the major market and we wish to to be able to continue our expansion there without causing disruption to it. Exports have risen by 96 per cent. since 1985 and our overwhelming concern is to maintain that growth in the market. We shall consult the industry and we must bear both factors in mind when we do so.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the recent increase in hill livestock compensatory allowances for sheep farmers in less-favoured areas is welcome support for the sheep industry in the uplands, as is the arrangement that was negotiated for British sheep farmers by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which was much better than what was originally proposed by the European Commission?

Mr. Curry: That is true. We were faced with proposals from Brussels that we felt were discriminatory. We opposed them in a determined manner and, as a result, we have a good outcome. We recognise that sheep farmers provide the main support for the uplands in economic and environmental terms and we are determined to maintain their livelihood.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that one of the major problems facing sheep farmers is dogs worrying sheep, which is particularly acute at this time of year when there are pregnant ewes and young lambs? Is he aware that the problem has been solved to a major extent in Northern Ireland by the introduction of a proper warden system paid for out of dog licensing? Is not it high time that that scheme was extended to the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Curry: The answer does not lie in a universal scheme of dog licences. A farmer is at liberty to take action against animals that can clearly be shown to be causing damage to his livestock. The bureaucratic course that the hon. Gentleman outlined would be a considerable imposition and we do not wish to go down that route.

Milk

3. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to extend the definition of milk to include sheep and goats milk; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): The definition of milk in the Food Act 1984 is somewhat restricted, but the Food Safety Bill will remedy this. That will allow us to make hygiene regulations on sheep and goats' milk.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend agree that the present definition of milk in our legislation is not logical or uniform and that it would be in the best interests of food safety and hygiene to modify that definition, to give confidence to all who purchase sheep and goats' milk? In particular, does my hon. Friend agree that microbiological tests on herds of a reasonable size would also help to restore such confidence?

Mr. Maclean: I am inclined to agree with my hon. Friend. Sheep and goats' milk is already produced to consistently high standards. We have issued voluntary codes of practice and guidance, but it would be in the best interests of the industry for sheep and goats' milk to be produced to the same high standards that already apply to cows' milk. We shall introduce regulations on sheep and goats' milk, but we shall make sure that they are not so over-regulatory that we have a nanny society.

British Food

4. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution his Department is making to improve the marketing of British-produced food.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The Government are firmly committed to improving the marketing of British food. I recently announced further funding for Food from Britain and I am looking to the industry to make marketing a major priority.

Mr. Coombs: What visits has my right hon. Friend made to European exhibitions of food and farming to assist and underline the marketing and excellence of British food?

Mr. Gummer: I had the pleasure yesterday of being in Spain to see the Alimenteria exhibition and I was impressed by the way in which a whole range of British firms are presenting British food especially for the Spanish market, which is growing. We doubled the exports of sheepmeat to Spain last year. There is a great deal more for us to do and I believe that British industry can do it.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the development of co-operative marketing ventures between farmers will form an essential part of improved product marketing in the 1990s? Can he tell the House what steps he is taking to encourage such ventures, bearing in mind the opportunities that will arise in eastern Europe?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right that co-operatives will be one of the better ways of encouraging marketing throughout Britain and with the rest of the Community. We already give help to co-operatives. Under the diversification scheme, we provide extra help for farmers who need to do feasibility and marketing studies. My hon. Friend asked about eastern Europe. I took a group of business men and farmers to Poland to seek new opportunities for industry. They were pleased with the reception that they received and with the way in which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and our diplomatic posts in Poland and helped them. I hope to undertake further such trips.

Green Pound

5. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the level of the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a large number of representations pressing for the green pound to be devalued.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that at present the green pound constitutes an unfair burden on the British farmer? Is he aware that the efforts that he is making to have that penalty removed command the enthusiastic and total support of farmers in Suffolk, South?

Mr. Gummer: I am glad that my neighbouring constituency supports that, because I believe that it is of great importance that farmers in Britain should be able to compete on equal terms with farmers in the rest of the Community. The green pound means that they work at a considerable disadvantage. We are fighting for a substantial reduction in that disadvantage, and I take every opportunity to press the Commission for a more realistic proposal than the one that it has put on the table so far.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Is not it ludicrous that British farmers have been working under a green pound disadvantage ever since we entered the Common Market, which means that the unfairness has now lasted almost two decades? Does the Minister agree that British farmers want to compete fairly, especially at a time of high interest rates, and that that fairness can commence only when green pound anomalies are eliminated?

Mr. Gummer: What the hon. Gentleman says is not true. For some time we had the benefit of a green pound that operated in the opposite direction and there was much less concern among British farmers to right the difference on those occasions. The fact remains that in recent years there has been a major disadvantage, and the hon. Gentleman is perfectly right about that. We know that it must be eliminated, and it has to be eliminated by the end of 1992. The quicker we redress the unfairness, the better. After 1992 we must have a system that is fair to all farmers in the Community, because British farmers will compete if they are given a fair chance to do so.

Sugar

6. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the European Economic Community sugar regime.

Mr. Curry: The European Community sugar regime is due for review by the end of June next year.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the EC sugar regime is immoral because it encourages over-production, it forces consumers in the Community to pay well over the world market price and it pauperises the Third world by encouraging dumping? Does he believe that national quotas are consistent with the 1992 philosophy?

Mr. Curry: I believe that we must make a distinction between the effects of the regime on cane sugar and its effects on beet sugar. It is satisfactory that the Community imports 1·3 million tonnes of raw cane sugar from the developing countries, and that concession is valuable to them. We have never disguised our belief that the price of beet sugar is far too high. We have always argued that the price should be cut. We did so yesterday in the Council of Ministers and we shall continue to press for that reform.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), I believe that British sugar farmers are the best and most efficient in Europe. Will my hon. Friend ensure that, whatever happens to the sugar regime, there will be no reduction of sugar quotas in Britain?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that the United Kingdom is not self-sufficient in sugar: she depends on cane imports for a good half of her supplies. If we are to begin to reform the Community regime and cut quantity, the process should not start in the United Kingdom.

Farm Incomes

7. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current level of farm incomes.

Mr. Gummer: We estimate that in 1989 farm incomes increased by 16 per cent. over the low levels of 1988. There were, of course, considerable variations between various types of farming and various regions.

Mr. Cran: I welcome the Government's determination to eliminate the green pound gap by 1992. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that a case can be made for faster action, to enable the farmers of east Yorkshire to begin to invest now and to take advantage of the opportunities that the internal market will undoubtedly present? Fixed capital investment in the agricultural sector fell by more than 40 per cent. in the six years to 1989: in any other industry that would be regarded as disastrous.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will know that the offer on the table is "one third, one third, one third", leading eventually to the elimination of the green pound. We do not think that that is enough; I agree with my hon. Friend that faster progress must be made. I also agree that the green pound needs to be eliminated if British farmers are to take full advantage of the single market. That is why we remain adamant that there must be no green pound once that market comes into line.

Mr. Molyneaux: When the Minister met the combined farmers' unions of the United Kingdom recently, was he able to give them an assurance that he would do his best to ensure that the beef sector in particular was placed on an even footing with its European rivals, especially in view of the present high interest rates?

Mr. Gummer: I told the unions what I have told the House on several occasions—that the aim of the battle that I am conducting with our European Community colleagues is to receive an answer that will substantially reduce the gap for United Kingdom producers. I use the word "battle" because I believe that we must fight hard. No other country gains any advantage from the change to a smaller gap; every other country gains an advantage from the change to a wider gap. Any hon. Member who thinks that this is not a battle has clearly never gone in for negotiation.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that dairy farmers' incomes are now enormously higher than any of them would have imagined a few years ago? Will he take this opportunity to confirm that his excellent scheme for the extra 1 per cent. of milk quota, 50 per cent. of which is to be given to the small farmers, has been accepted by the European Community?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to say that, after several discussions, the Community has accepted the overwhelming majority of our proposals for the extra 1 per cent. I shall be able to announce the details in the week beginning 12 March, which means that the quota will be allocated before 31 March, to the benefit of producers as a whole. The one part of the scheme that will have to wait is the part that we are still discussing—new entrants.

Animals (Slaughter)

8. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about monitoring of the welfare of animals at slaughter.

Mr. Maclean: It is the responsibility of all involved with the slaughter of animals to ensure that it is carried out humanely and in compliance with the law. Local authorities enforce the legislation, and officers of the state veterinary service also visit all slaughterhouses to monitor standards and give advice.

Mr. Howarth: Does the Minister accept that, because the inspections by local authorities and MAFF officials are, as it were, by appointment only, the findings and figures resulting from such inspections are somewhat artificial, as the slaughterhouses can prepare for the visits? Would not it be better if the officials had the power to make snap visits? They could then obtain a more accurate picture, and ensure that the regulations are being observed.

Mr. Maclean: We are confident that the regulations are being properly enforced throughout the country. State veterinary service officials and local enforcement officers already have sufficient powers to visit slaughterhouses and catch out anyone who is committing a misdemeanour. However, we hope soon to be able to lay more detailed regulations dealing with further aspects of animal welfare at the point of slaughter. If we need to take further powers, we shall do so.

Mr. David Nicholson: Several of my constituents, and others elsewhere, are concerned about the possible arrangements for the export of live horses for slaughter. Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to encourage the Government to retain the minimum value system for the export of horses?

Mr. Maclean: I do not need to encourage the Government. We have said time and again that we want to retain the minimum value system. We are arguing for its retention in our European Community negotiations. My hon. Friend may have noticed that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recently published a statement calling for greatly enhanced welfare treatment throughout the EEC for all farm animals, including the welfare of animals in transit. That would include horses and ponies.

Mr. Ron Davies: I congratulate the Minister on the recent favourable publicity for his Department in respect of farm animal welfare, in particular the welfare of animals at slaughter. We shall support his negotiating stance in Europe and shall look carefully at what he brings back from Europe. If, however, he is so concerned about animal welfare, why has his Department chosen to ignore 33 of the 51 recommendations in the Farm Animal Welfare Council report on the welfare of animals at slaughter? What does he intend to do about the recent Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals report, which showed that 53 per cent. of young bulls slaughtered in British slaughterhouses were not properly stunned before slaughter?

Mr. Maclean: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's assurance that aspects of animal welfare and improved

standards at slaughter and at other times during animals' lives will unite both sides of the House. That is a very important matter. It is a shame, therefore, that his later criticism was slightly unfair. The Government have accepted 104 of the 117 recommendations in the Farm Animal Welfare Council report on the slaughter of red meat animals. We are unable to accept the other recommendations at the moment because we need to introduce primary legislation before they can be implemented. Other recommendations will require the agreement of the European Community. That is a matter which we are also keen to pursue. The report to which the hon. Gentleman referred was financed largely by my Department. We are anxious to follow up its recommendations. Therefore, when regulations are laid, dealing with the welfare of animals at slaughter, we intend to include a paragraph dealing with head restraints, in order to ensure that animals are held properly and securely and are properly stunned before they are slaughtered.

Flood Defences

9. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made a recent assessment of the state of flood defences.

Mr. Maclean: The state of the country's flood defences is kept under continual review, and we have greatly increased the grants in recent years. The effects of recent storms are likely to lead to changes in the National Rivers Authority and local authority programmes. We intend to ensure that Government funding is sufficient to take account of necessary adjustments to programmes and priorities.

Mr. Key: That is very good news. I hope that my hon. Friend will never lose sight of the fact that underneath every flood lies someone's home or livelihood. Will he listen sympathetically to the National Rivers Authority, which may wish to reorder its priorities for the funding of our defences? It is not just that there have been coastal floods; there have been massive inland floods—for instance, from Salisbury Plain to the Solent. When the National Rivers Authority has undertaken hydrological surveys, I hope that my hon. Friend will listen sympathetically to what it has to say about its needs.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is right to point out that flooding causes awful problems for the unfortunate victims. I sympathise with his constituents because of the problems that they are having to endure. I assure him that MAFF flood engineers are anxious to listen to the National Rivers Authority's representations. We should like to encourage the relevant local authorities, with which we also work in partnership, to let us have their assessment of their needs. We shall happily listen to any request to reorder our priorities so that the massive amount of extra funding that we are making available for flood defence can be spent in the best possible way.

Mr. Loyden: Will the Minister draw to the attention of the NRA the fact that land erosion on many of our river banks contributes to the problems of flooding and, quite frankly, appears to have been grossly neglected for many years?

Mr. Maclean: I shall certainly draw the attention of the NRA to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. The Ministry, in conjunction with the NRA and the local authorities, makes an assessment of priorities. We have funding available and if the NRA and the local authorities determine that there is a substantial flood problem, the Ministry will make grants available.

Mr. Robert Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that we all have a responsibility to protect Britain's coastal heritage? Will he look particularly at the problems of smaller local authorities in putting together coastal protection schemes in conjunction with flood protection?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are particularly aware of the needs of local authorities. That is why next year we intend to increase the maximum amount of the staggered grants available to local authorities to 75 per cent. We usually operate a policy that if a small authority with small resources requires a large flood prevention scheme, we make more grant available than if a large authority with large resources requires a small scheme.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

10. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the level of compensation payable for cattle with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Gummer: I have received many representations supporting my announcement of 13 February 1990.

Mr. Boyes: The Minister will be aware that there has been a staggering increase in the number of cows notified as having BSE since he introduced the 100 per cent. scheme. Does not that show the reckless negligence of the Minister in not having introduced the schemes earlier, with the result that contaminated cows have entered the food chain? What new measures does the Minister have to protect the food chain and, above all, to protect my constituents who are extremely concerned?

Mr. Gummer: The only recklessness is the hon. Gentleman's in believing a report in *The Guardian* without checking the facts. There has been an increase in the number of cows reported as having BSE since I made my announcement as there was before I made it. When I made my announcement I said that I was doing so because that increase had taken place and would continue to take place because of the nature of the disease and the time that it takes to come out from original contamination. I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of any danger to public health because for extra protection we remove from every animal taken to slaughter the offal that might otherwise have been thought to harbour the disease.

Mr. Hague: Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations from his hon. Friend on his decision to increase compensation? Will he confirm that the beef trade with West Germany is almost back to normal? Does not that vindicate those who kept calm during the recent media excitement and rightly pointed out that, given the range of measures that he has taken, British beef is perfectly safe to eat at home or abroad.

Mr. Gummer: There is no question but that the first priority of Government is to protect the health of the public and we have done that. The second priority is for

the House not to create needless rumours or fears as the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) has done.

Dr. David Clark: Has the Minister noticed that the number of BSE-infected cows notified is running in excess of 460 per week? Does he accept that that figure is considerably higher than the peak figure anticipated by his own advisory committee, the Southwood committee, which suggested a peak of between 350 and 400 per week? Does he appreciate that there is therefore deep concern on both sides of the House? Finally, will he do one more thing and undertake a random survey of 10 per cent. of all cattle slaughtered at abbatoirs and slaughterhouses so that we can gauge accurately how widespread this pernicious disease is?

Mr. Gummer: As usual, the hon. Gentleman mixes up two wholly separate things and, not surprisingly, comes to the wrong conclusion as a result. What are the two different situations? First, there has been, is, and will be —over the next few months and, indeed, probably for the next year or so—a continuing growth in the number of cases of BSE. That is exactly what I have said and what I shall go on saying. It has not changed at all; it is in the nature of the disease. These are not new cases; they are coming out because animals ate contaminated feed. The second issue is whether the Southwood committee was exactly right in the number of cases that it predicted. The growth that it predicted was exactly right. That is what we are seeing. The committee predicted that the growth would be exactly as we have seen it; its figures were merely slightly lower than the ones that we have at the moment. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may laugh, but the fact is that he is using figures to frighten people who need not be frightened. He is instilling in people a fear that they need not have. As so often, he ought to be ashamed of himself.

Food Irradiation

11. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports he has received from independent scientific committees regarding the safety of food irradiation.

Mr. Maclean: The safety of food irradiation has been confirmed in the report of the independent Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods entitled "The Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods". This includes reports from other independent scientific committees on a range of matters, including toxicology, nutrition, microbiology and radiology, and concludes that irradiation can safely be permitted.

Mr. Colvin: The House will be pleased to hear that those committees will be joining the Ministry, the World Health Organisation and 35 other countries in saying that irradiated food is safe, but my hon. Friend failed to get that message across to the women's institutes of this country, who lobbied Parliament in force last week. Will he do something to improve his publicity? When he gets a package together, will he consider including in it details of the regulatory framework for irradiation? He will be able to include those once the Bill that we shall be debating this afternoon is on the statute book.

Mr. Maclean: Like all sensible hon. Members on both sides of the House, my hon. Friend is in awe of the women's institutes. I take on board the points that he has made. When irradiation is being used, there will be the tightest possible regulatory regime for it. The Bill that is currently before the House is not the end of the matter. The one issue on which the women's institutes are in complete agreement with the Government is the freedom of the consumer to choose. If 8 per cent. or 13 per cent. of the public want to buy irradiated food I cannot see why we should stop them.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: What does the Minister have to say about comments made last week by Professor Bevan Moseley, head of the institute of food research at Reading? The professor said that the number of cases of food poisoning in Britain could be halved if we were allowed to have irradiated poultry meat. Bearing in mind that only 21 out of 140 countries allow irradiation, that only 11 allow poultry meat to be irradiated, and that only two of those 11 have actually used irradiation for poultry, will the Minister take this opportunity to dismiss out of hand Professor Moseley's comments and assure the people of this country that the Government do not want to see the large-scale irradiation of poultry?

Mr. Maclean: No, I shall not seek to dismiss the comments of one of Britain's most eminent scientists and experts on food irradiation. The extent of the reduction in the number of food sickness cases related to irradiation will depend on consumer uptake. If consumers want to use irradiated foods—and we all know that irradiation is a safe process—if there is a growth in demand, irradiation will certainly have a major part to play. If, as forecasts suggest, only a minority of consumers want irradiation, the part played by irradiation will remain relatively small.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. So that there may be no distress in the Chamber, perhaps I should explain that I am being heavily urged by the Procedure Committee to speed up Question Time. As those who are in the Chamber for agriculture questions know well, sometimes the sun comes out after the rain. If hon. Members do not remain in the Chamber it is difficult to call them.

Mrs. Gorman: As the Ministry has proved to my satisfaction the safety of irradiation, will the Minister consider extending it to the carcases of chickens slaughtered under zoonoses orders because they may be contaminated with salmonella? Is not it an acknowledged fact that most chickens have salmonella, but that so long as they are properly treated they can be used in the food chain? Is not that better than wastefully slaughtering them and dumping the carcases?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is certainly the sun after the rain—she is often the calm before the storm as well. It is better not to confuse two separate issues. All that we seek to do is to make irradiation available to consumers if they wish to use it. I have no intention of extending irradiation compulsorily to any process or foodstuff. If consumers want to use irradiated chicken meat, poultry meat and carcases, they may do so, provided that the food is safe.

Fishing

12. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the present state of the fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: The most urgent need facing the industry and the Government is to work for effective conservation of fish as a renewable resource on a Communitywide basis.

Mr. Taylor: While the Minister looks towards effective conservation, he will inevitably be aware of the great hardship being caused to some in the fishing industry and of the fact that bankruptcy threatens no small number. Will he consider again a decommissioning scheme to help the process take place naturally without the need for bankruptcy and the poverty that that brings? I hope that he will be able to bring better news to the House.

Mr. Curry: No, I do not believe that the answer lies in a decommissioning scheme. I believe that it lies in better management measures, which would introduce a greater element of market forces, and also in effective conservation measures of precisely the kind that we have announced today for haddock.

Sir Michael Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that although the quota system has been with us for some time, fish stocks seem never to have been more inadequate? What is the cause? Is it that the quotas have been pitched wrongly or that they have not been adhered to?

Mr. Curry: I think that there is an element of both. I think that the quotas have been over-generous in the past, but the way in which fishing has taken place has meant that there have been discards. Equipment has sometimes behaved in a different way from that expected. For example, we have a 90 mm net, but when it is operated it is equivalent to a 60 mm net in some cases. Therefore, the answer must lie in much more selective gear in the fishing industry.

Mr. Morley: Is the Minister aware of the disappointment of fishermen that licences are still being issued for the dumping of toxic waste, even though the Government promised that it would be stopped by December last year? Is he further aware of the disappointment that licences will be issued for sewage sludge dumping for at least eight more years? I appreciate that there has been a decade of lack of investment in sewage outfall works, but will the Minister take steps to phase out licences for sewage sludge dumping and other dumping and stop our seas being used as a cesspit?

Mr. Curry: First, no licences are issued to dump toxic waste, because the waste is not toxic. Secondly, within two years from now there will be only a couple of licences, and they will disappear very shortly after that. Thirdly, it is by no means an open and shut question that there will be a net environmental gain from incinerating sewage sludge rather than putting it into the sea. We have decided that that is the effective course to take and we shall do so at the earliest opportunity, given the problem of planning permission for building plant. We have an extremely comprehensive programme which the hon. Gentleman should support.

NFU Speech

13. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has placed in the Library a copy of his speech to the National Farmers Union annual general meeting.

Mr. Gummer: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Taylor: Conservative Members are always grateful when my right hon. Friend puts a copy of his speech in the Library. Will he note that all farmers in the Esher constituency were delighted with that speech, which showed a forthright approach to all the problems of agriculture but in particular the Government's determination to make sure that the green pound was phased out by the end of the 1992 programme? Will he continue to reinforce that determination?

Mr. Gummer: There is no doubt that the green pound should be substantially devalued as quickly as possible. I am sure that farmers in constituencies other than Esher —and even some Opposition Members— will support that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As farmers who suffered were compensated following Chernobyl and such matters must have been dealt with at meetings and speeches to the National Farmers Union, why cannot the same principle be applied to the fishing industry? Why should fishermen lose thousands of pounds through storm damage while farmers are compensated when they suffer from things like Chernobyl? Cannot action be taken, especially as the Isle of Man Government now pay compensation to their fishermen?

Mr. Gummer: That really is a collection of things shoved together without a theme. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that farmers are not compensated for insurable storm damage. To compare Chernobyl with storm damage at sea is to compare two totally different activities and thus not surprisingly results in a wrong conclusion. The hon. Gentleman should accept that the British farming industry is helped to look after 80 per cent. of this country's land area and produce food for this nation. Year after year for the past 10 years, except for one year, the British fishing industry has enjoyed an increase in returns from its fishing activities. Many fishermen would recognise the past 10 years as being among some of the best that they have had.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. After my duties in the House I shall depart for a visit to Scotland.

Mr. Redmond: Bearing in mind the decision of the Doncaster health authority, the community health council and a recent MORI poll which showed that the people are opposed to Doncaster royal infirmary and the Montagu hospital opting out of the Health Service, for the sake of democracy will the Prime Minister support a local referendum before that decision is implemented?

The Prime Minister: No hospitals are opting out of the National Health Service. They are being given the chance to become self-governing and, therefore, to have far more say in decisions about the resources available and much better management, much closer to the consultants and nurses. Many people will want it that way. The hon. Gentleman should see how the system works; I think that he will find that many self-governing hospitals operate far better than those which do not choose that path.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Militant violence has no part to play in the fixing of the community charge in our town halls?

The Prime Minister: I gladly confirm what my hon. Friend says. Any violent or intimidatory demonstrations—organised, I understand from an excellent article in *The Times* today, by the Militant Left—are the negation of democracy. People should pursue their protests peacefully and in accordance with the democratic process. It is quite wrong for hon. Members to suggest that people should disobey the law by not paying their community charge.

Mr. Kinnock: First, I agree with everything that the Prime Minister has just said, as I have made clear for a long time. Will the Prime Minister say why her Government think that it would

"not be in the public interest"

to use their powers to seek the disqualification of the proven liars who now head the House of Fraser?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry answered a question—*[Interruption.]*—or rather, made a statement yesterday in which he answered many of those questions in detail. I have read fully the replies that he made. The prosecution is a matter for the prosecuting authorities and the other powers are a matter for the regulatory authorities. The quasi-judicial decision is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Indstry; he has made it and answered to the House.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister agree with the *Financial Times* that in the Harrods case

"the real issue . . . is public confidence in the business and financial system"?

If the Government will not use their power to disqualify directors who have been shown to be guilty of deliberate and persistent dishonesty, in what circumstances will she ever take action?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, that is a quasi-judicial decision for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave yesterday. He said:

"I have considered the matter carefully and have concluded that it would not be in the public interest to seek such an order in this case. Those who read the report can make their own assessment of the conduct of those involved. The provisions of that Act are intended not as a punishment, but as a protection for the public. I can add nothing further to that."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1990; Vol. 168, c. 875.]

My right hon. Friend gave many detailed replies, some of which I have read, and some of which were technical. I rest my reply upon his.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister has still not answered the questions from both sides of the House about why the Secretary of State did not use the powers that he so clearly has. The Government have the powers to act. By their inaction, they are contradicting the public interest in the honest conduct of business in Britain. Is not that an open invitation to others, who could employ the same dishonesty as that shown by the directors of Harrods? Why do the Government so favour those who are very guilty when they happen to be very rich?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, if there were any fraudulent offences, they would be matters for the prosecuting authorities. Any question on that would therefore lie with my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said yesterday, he has answered the questions about the report in full, and I must rest upon them.

I have not, however, answered the right hon. Gentleman's first comment, that he agreed with me fully about condemning Militant—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Will the right hon. Gentleman also condemn the 28 Labour Members who are urging that people should not pay their community charge?

Mr. Barry Porter *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter).

Mr. Faulds: It is an abuse.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself.

Mr. Porter: Does my right hon. Friend accept that a gentleman came to my surgery the other day who advanced some mild reservations about one or two details about the implementation of the community charge? What concerned him was that he could not understand the alternative, and I was unable to give him that information. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend has any information from Walworth road which might lead her——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has no responsibility for what happens in Walworth road.

Q2. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Prime Minister's attention been called to the cost of collecting the poll tax compared with the cost of collecting the rates? In Wales, for example, the cost will rocket from £9 million to more than £25 million. All the additional bureaucracy, new equipment and even new buildings will have to be paid for by the community chargepayer. In the circumstances, is not it sheer hypocrisy for the Government to lecture our local authorities on financial stringency and cost cutting?

The Prime Minister: If more people pay community charge than were paying rates—which is part of the object of the exercise, as 17 million people were not paying rates and many of them will pay the community charge—it will cost more to collect, but nothing like so much as it would to collect both a roof tax and a local income tax.

Q3. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: Will my right hon. Friend utterly condemn the disgraceful and dangerous scenes that we have witnessed in various council chambers across the country, orchestrated by various Left-wing groups and encouraged by those Labour Members who decline to obey the law by threatening to withhold payment of their community charge? Will my right hon. Friend also——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question, please. It is not fair on others.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I utterly condemn the violent scenes which seem to have been organised by the Militant tendency. They show precisely the same violence as we have seen before at Grunwick, in the coal strike and at Wapping, and they are the negation of democracy. We also condemn anyone, especially an hon. Member, who chooses to disobey the law by refusing to pay his community charge. That is totally wrong and means that Opposition Members obey the law only if they make it, not when another Government do. That is undemocratic.

Q4. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Orme: The Prime Minister will be aware that today is international women's day, which is being celebrated throughout the world. In this country, however, millions of women are suffering from the Conservative Government's economic policies? Will the Prime Minister now take steps to help many of those women by increasing child benefit immediately?

The Prime Minister: No, but I am happy to remind the right hon. Gentleman, as it is international women's day, that thanks to the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) —women will, for the first time, be taxed separately which will be a great advantage. I must also add how grateful we are that our small number of Heads of Government have been added to by another woman Head of Government, in Nicaragua.

Q5. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Hugh Rossi: In view of the criticisms levelled against the United Kingdom at The Hague yesterday in relation to the proposals to cease the dumping of industrial waste, albeit non-toxic, by 1992, and of treated sewage-sludge by 1998, will my right hon. Friend tell the House what proportion of pollution of the North sea is due to those current practices and what proportion is due to the emission of untreated waste of every kind into the rivers Elbe, Weser, Rhine, Moselle and Schelde?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend, who knows a great deal about these matters, knows that trace elements contained in sewage sludge account for only 1 per cent. of the total North sea load. The great amount of contamination in the North sea comes from the rivers that he mentioned. The Rhine, the Meuse and the Elbe deposit about 65 per cent. of contaminants into the North sea, which is more than three times the whole of that deposited by our own rivers. My hon. Friend mentioned sewage sludge being dumped in the North sea. That will have to be replaced by burning it on land and we shall require planning permission for about 10 incinerators to comply with our undertaking.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Ashdown.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called Mr. Ashdown, who is the leader of the second largest Opposition party.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise how welcome was her statement over the weekend that she would reconsider some aspects of the poll tax? In that process, will she think again about the advantages of a local income tax, which would be fairer, more efficient and simpler? Does not that enjoy exactly the same level of accountability for local government as that to which she must answer nationally? Does she appreciate that if she will show an open mind on that, she will give hope to many who will suffer under the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: What I said at the weekend repeated what the Secretary of State for the Environment had said in a debate in the House—that if there was any fresh evidence, he would look again at the calculation of the standard spending assessment. That was the undertaking that I repeated at the weekend.

As for a local income tax, that would be just about the most unpopular and bureaucratic way of raising money for local authorities. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will find that when the community charge has been working, it will be realised that it is the best way of collecting money for local authorities, bearing in mind that one in four people will have a rebate and that there is also transitional relief, all expenditure on which will be met by the taxpayer.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take business questions first.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said that I would take business questions first.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after business questions, in the usual way.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows——

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)—he knows this well—that we are still in the middle of Question Time. I am now taking business questions. I will take points of order ——

Mr. Nellist: It is about the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order, about the Prime Minister or anyone else, after business questions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 12 MARCH—Until seven o'clock motion on the Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order.

Afterwards motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order which is a consolidation measure.

Proceedings on the Capital Allowances Bill *[Lords]*, which is a consolidation measure.

TUESDAY 13 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Motion on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order

WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

THURSDAY 15 MARCH—Until seven o'clock completion of remaining stages of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Consideration of any Lords amendments to the Coal Industry Bill which may be received.

Motion to amend schedule 1 of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 16 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 19 MARCH—Second Reading of the War Crimes Bill.

Dr. Cunningham: Is the Leader of the House aware that on Monday evening his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy placed in the Library a copy of a departmental minute seeking to indemnify Nuclear Electric in the sum of £2,500 million? It is made clear in the privatisation Act—the Electricity Act 1989—that any sum in excess of £1,000 million that is so used must be debated and approved by the House. That is a large sum of public money. Will the Leader of the House assure us that the matter will be debated before any confirmation of the decision of the Secretary of State for Energy can be approved?

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the widespread astonishment and anger, not only in the House but outside it, about the report on the House of Fraser/Harrods scandal? Is it not clearly inadequate that Parliament should have only a brief period—about 30 minutes—to discuss the matter, on a statement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? Is it not in everyone's interest—not least in the interest of the Government, who commissioned the inquiry—that these matters should be fully debated in Parliament, and may we have an early opportunity to debate them in Government time? I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is aware of the support for that proposition on both sides of the House.

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the activities of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the chairman of the Conservative party, in relation to poll tax? Will he arrange for the chairman of the Conservative party—instead of erecting bogus figures about responsibility—to come to the House and bring with him his 12 Cabinet colleagues, of whom the Leader of the House is one, who represent constituencies in Conservative counties, where in every case the poll tax is hugely in excess of the Government's recommended level?

Why do the Government blame Labour councils when, under Cabinet Ministers' very noses, these huge poll tax figures are being set? Can I say—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] May I ask the Leader of the House to explain why in Tandridge, in his own constituency of Surrey, East, which has a Tory council, the poll tax is £79 above the Government's recommended level?

Hon. Members: Come on.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I was on the point of interrupting the hon. Gentleman, so perhaps I may do so now. Business questions do not provide the opportunity to make a statement.

Dr. Cunningham: I am coming to the question, Mr. Speaker.

Why, in Mole Valley, is the poll tax £85 above the Government's level and why in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Defence, is it £93—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he must ask business questions.

Dr. Cunningham: My question is simply this, Mr. Speaker. As, in the face of public outcry, so many Conservative Members appear to have changed their minds about supporting the poll tax, will the Leader of the House organise an early debate so that we can vote on the matter again and throw the whole thing out?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no intention of arranging an urgent debate about that, although if such a debate took place it would provide us with yet another opportunity to ask Labour Members why 28 of their number are trying to incite people not to pay a tax put in place by the House.

Mr. Nellist: It is 31, not 28.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That makes it three times worse. Such a debate would also provide us with an opportunity to make it plain that, under Labour councils, taxes will inevitably be higher than under Conservative-controlled councils.

Let me deal with the hon. Gentleman's more serious points. He inquired about the electricity industry. The departmental minute deposited by my right hon. Friend gives notice to Parliament that it is his intention to bring forward, if necessary, an order to increase the current limit of £1 billion for liabilities under schedule 12 of the Electricity Act 1989 to £2·5 billion. As you, Mr. Speaker, made clear yesterday when this matter was raised, the order would be subject to parliamentary approval.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made a statement yesterday about the report on the House of Fraser. I note the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate. Clearly there is no opportunity for a debate next week. Moreover, I understand that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry is currently examining the investigative powers of the Department under the Companies Act 1989. It may well be thought appropriate to await its report before considering a debate. In any event, the matter can be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend for an early debate on early-day motion 659?

[That this House views with grave concern the serious allegations made against the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers by the Daily Mirror and Thames Television Cook Report Special on 5th March that moneys from foreign countries were accepted in order to prolong a national industrial dispute and that one of those same countries, namely Libya, was at the same time supporting terrorism within the United Kingdom; notes that allegations of fraud and embezzlement were made to the effect that some of these moneys were used by officers and trustees of the National Union of Mineworkers for their own personal gain and that allegations of dishonesty were made against officers of the National Union of Mineworkers still in office; calls upon Mr. Attorney General to refer all these allegations forthwith to the Director of Public Prosecutions; and requests and requires assurances from those honourable Members still sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers that none of the money they receive in election expenses is derived from Libyan or similarly tainted sources.]

It concerns the National Union of Mineworkers and allegations made by a former Labour Member of the House, Mr. Robert Maxwell, that £5 million came from the terrorist regime of Libya shortly after WPC Yvonne Fletcher was shot dead by the same people, and that the money was then misappropriated by union officials. May we also in that debate examine why no Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), have said a word about this scandal when they would be so quick to do so if it concerned a City institution?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend understands, the investigation of matters of that kind is, in the first instance, a matter for the police service rather than for either of the Law Officers' Departments. Anyone in possession of evidence to support the point he has made should, of course, place it in the hands of the police, who will be very ready to investigate the allegations. I am sure that the House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for having brought the matter to its attention.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing that the War Crimes Bill is to be introduced so swiftly. May I ask him whether we are to have a statement on the setting up of a special investigative unit such as the units that have been created in Canada, Australia and the United States so that justice may be done, so that those who are guilty and against whom there is sufficient weight of evidence may be brought to trial and those against whom there is not such evidence may be freed of anxiety?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his appreciation of the prospective legislation. It will, of course, be for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to answer questions of that kind in detail in consideration of the Bill, but the hon. and learned Gentleman can be sure that appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure that the most effective investigations can be undertaken with the objectives that he has in mind.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In view of the recent Consumers Association report revealing malpractices by some estate agents, linked to the feeling that investor protection may not necessarily be working out in precisely the way in which the Financial Services Act 1986 intended, would my right hon. and learned Friend consider the possibility of initiating, not a narrow debate on the House of Fraser, but a much wider debate taking account of these concerns?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad that my hon. Friend has returned to the House, which we all welcome. The report gives us an opportunity of broadening the field of inquiry. I shall draw the point that he raises to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Frank Field.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry if there was some confusion, but the House should know that I always give precedence at the next opportunity to those who were called last at the previous business question time. I thought that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was rising.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Following the statement by the Leader of the House last week on the future of the Social Services Committee, may I ask him whether he has had a chance to consult again more widely on the desirability of splitting the Committee so that it more accurately reflects Government Departments? May I invite him to make a further statement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The matter has been raised through the usual channels. I am considering how best to take the matter further, and I shall seek to inform the House in due course.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the arguments for dividing the Health and Social Security Departments apply equally to the case

[Mr. Terence L. Higgins]

for dividing the Select Committees responsible for monitoring them, and that there is concern on both sides of the House about the delay in making this change? It is important that the departmental structure should be maintained, not least in this area, which accounts for almost half the total of Government expenditure and where the Committees have an onerous task. Will my right hon. and learned Friend see whether he can do something about this matter next week? The delay is a matter of concern.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Even in the face of this formidably bipartisan combination of pressure, including the energetic support of my right hon. Friend, I do not think that I can promise that there will be a reaction next week. I take note, however, of the points that have been made.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House afraid of having a debate about the House of Fraser because of the connections with the Sultan of Brunei? Does he recall that in 1985, when the pound was worth $1·08 and sinking through the floor, the sultan found £5 billion to prop up the pound? As a result, the Government decided to lay off the House of Fraser and its surrogates, the Fayed brothers. That is why we have the cover-up. As for the Libyan connection, the only one that I am aware of during the miners' strike was the millions of barrels of oil that came from Libya to prop up the Tory Government.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is nothing if not an expert on diversion. He should be ready to tell the House a great deal more about the Libyan connection in the strike. We shall look forward to hearing from him. If the publication of a report as extensive and as critical as that which the House discussed yesterday is a cover-up operation, the hon. Gentleman is even more extraordinary than I think he is.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Delighted as I am to acknowledge my right hon. and learned Friend's acceptance of the work of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on company investigations, the terms of reference of the Committee do not include, nor are they intended to include, the study of any particular company and its problems. As I feel sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would like to have more time to give us the background of his opinion, I commend to my right hon. and learned Friend the suggestion that a debate would be right and proper.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Obviously I take account of the proposition that my hon. Friend has put before the House, without being able to make any commitment.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Following the reply which the Leader of the House made on 26 February about the funding of political parties in the emerging democracies in eastern Europe, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman say whether he has had the discussions which he promised to have with the Foreign Secretary about the nature of the funding, the timetabling of the resources and the methods by which moneys can be paid to the parties in eastern Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), is undertaking, or will undertake, consultations with the various parties about the best way of taking the matter forward in pursuit of the sort of objective which is shared by both sides of the House.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. and learned Friend find time to debate the fact that this week the Liberal-controlled Richmond upon Thames borough council opened a new town hall that has been built at a cost of £12 million? Over the next 20 years it will add £10 per head per year to the community charge. Are not my constituents and their Member of Parliament right to protest about this reckless and indefensible civic extravagance?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having focused so precisely the grounds on which he and his constituents are objecting to characteristic Liberal extravagance.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his replies about a debate on the House of Fraser? The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) made a reasonable point about how limited the inquiry of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will be. The task that faces the House cannot adequately be dealt with in a statement. Nothing more nor less than the probity of British business is at stake, and we should have an early debate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I said in answer to the first question on the subject that the matter can be discussed through the usual channels. It is always open to the Opposition to select the matter as a topic for one of their debates.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give further consideration to the possibility of a debate on the affairs of the NUM, not so much just so that the House can get to the bottom of the matter, as to give Opposition Members the opportunity to explain why they are suddenly so eager to dump a man to whom not so long ago they were all busy paying court as a great hero of Socialist labour? Is not this a possibly unique example of the rats trying to throw one of their own kind overboard?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has put the matter extremely compactly. I shall see whether any opportunity is likely to arise for the further discussion of that interesting insight.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Is the Leader of the House aware of the anxiety felt in Wales about the unclearness of the situation with regard to the announcement concerning the Secretary of State for Wales, especially in view of the breadth of the portfolio of the Welsh Office, which includes health, education, housing and local government? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made before the Welsh Grand Committee meets next week so that we may have a clear picture of the position in regard to his right hon. Friend?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I see no reason for any such statement. The hon. Gentleman will recall that my right hon. Friend's predecessor as Secretary of State for Wales also gave substantial advance notice of the likelihood of his departure from that office. That did not prevent him from fulfilling the duties of that office with great

distinction, as he did throughout his time there. He has been followed with equal distinction by my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State, and he will continue to be an excellent Secretary of State until the time comes for him to leave the office.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the substantial public interest and concern about the revelations on funds paid to NUM sources during the strike some years ago? Is he further aware that that is a legitimate matter of concern to our constituents, upon which they expect the House to cast the maximum possible light? In those circumstances, will my right hon. and learned Friend bring forward a resolution next week to establish a Select Committee with the power to take evidence and call witnesses and so get to the bottom of the matter, which remains desperately unclear?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend adds to the clarity with which the House is being informed about a matter which clearly deserves to be followed closely.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Would it not have been more dignified for the House last Friday if one of the main contributions to talking out the Bill that seeks to help the victims of nuclear tests had some from someone other than the Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Minister whose Department seems to want to dump the Bill without debate? May we have a statement next week on the humane and important Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay)? Is there anything that the Leader of the House can do to facilitate consideration of the Bill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Bill has so far taken its place in the ordinary way for consideration along with other private Members' Bills. I see no prospect of it receiving any different treatment from other Bills in the queue.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the War Crimes Bill, which I support, raises some of the gravest issues that could possibly come before the House of major changes in British justice? Is it not important that the Bill should be dealt with in a non-partisan way and that there should be a free vote?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of the issues raised in the Bill. He will recollect that when it was considered in embryo, as it were, before Christmas, the House had a free vote, and that will continue to be the position.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement later today by the chairman of the Tory party because some hon. Members have been smeared by this disgraceful press release, yesterday, to which several hon. Members and the Prime Minister have referred today? Is he aware that the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, while it understands that tempers can boil over when millions of families will be pauperised by the poll tax, does not organise, advocate or condone premeditated violence of the kind that has taken place recently.

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman also aware that what has really upset him today is the news this morning, based on official figures, that 42.5 per cent. of people liable for the tax in Glasgow have still not paid it after 11 months? When those people get 10 million reinforcements from England and Wales, the Prime Minister's flagship will be turned into a Titanic.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's question does not relate to the business of the House, but it gives me the opportunity of commenting yet again on the way in which so many Opposition Members—the number seems to increase with every report—are encouraging people to refuse to pay a tax which has been lawfully and effectively put in place by the House. That is the matter for concern, together with the violence of the opposition to the tax which has been generated.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my hon. Friend accept that many of us thought yesterday that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was too languid and laid back about the Al-Fayed/Harrods report? Does he not also accept that for the reputation of this country and the City there can be no neutrals as far as fraud is concerned? Does he also agree that the idea that the 750-page report should be sent to a Select Committee, when the Chairman of the Select Committee has said, "It ain't me, guv," is not on? The report is before the House. I believe that the country and the City will demand that there is a debate on it in Government time. If we can debate the conduct of one Member for six hours, why can we not spare three hours to talk about the conduct of these discreditable and loathsome creatures?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already said that the possibility of a debate on that topic must be discussed through the usual channels. I have taken note of the fact that a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have urged upon me the case for such a debate. I can do no more than that.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Does the Leader of the House recall that a couple of weeks ago I asked for a statement about the threat to the jobs of some 2,000 workers at the James Seddon clothing factories, including some 1,000 jobs in the Falkirk district? Now that that company has gone into receivership and more than 100 people have been made redundant in Denny and Falkirk, will the Leader of the House urge the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement or, more important, to take urgent action to intervene to stop what could be one of the most serious threats of redundancy to affect Falkirk district for many years?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: While there can be no presumption that the Secretary of State can or should intervene in every matter of this kind, I know that he will be following very closely the events referred to by the hon. Member, and I shall bring to his attention the matter the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. and learned Friend try to provide time at an early opportunity either in the context of the EEC or of industry to discuss the moves which were taking place in the Commission even on Tuesday during our debate on the economy, whereby Japanese firms building cars in Britain with a British content will have those cars deducted from their quota, whereas cars built in America by the same Japanese firms will not have them deducted? How are we to view the Common Market and the operation of the single market if,

[Sir Hal Miller]

as a member state, we are to be discriminated against in this fashion in favour of a non-member state? That is a serious question for people in the midlands in particular, and we want a robust statement of Government policy on that issue. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will seek to provide an opportunity for it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The only reason for our resisting demands for a debate on that subject is that the Government's position—and, indeed, that of the House—is already clear. It would be quite improper for British cars produced by British workers in Britain to be treated differently from other cars produced in the Community. There is no case whatever for treating such cars as though they were produced in Japan.

My hon. Friend is entirely right. The case is being pressed energetically in the Community by all my right hon. Friends, and is receiving substantial support from a number of partner nations. It is important that that case should prevail.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Will the Leader of the House consider the question of education in the London borough of Newham, where a huge increase in population is projected as a result of docklands developments? As he knows, when similar circumstances arose in the new towns, special arrangements were put in place to finance the infrastructure, including schools, and I feel that such arrangements should be introduced in Newham. Deputations from the borough have been unable to persuade Education Ministers, however: they say that the money will be allocated when the population is there.

Building schools involves a lead time of five years. Unless something is done, people moving into the brave new world of docklands will find that their children are bussed out of the area for five years before the schools are built. Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate so that the matter can be properly discussed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will certainly take note of the hon. Gentleman's commendation of the prosperity and successful expansion in and around his constituency that has resulted from Government initiatives. We welcome his support, and I shall certainly draw the aspect that he has mentioned to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): We are all very grateful that at last there is to be a debate on war crimes, but is not a war crime a war crime wherever it is committed? Surely the agenda should not be confined to German territory which might well have been occupied temporarily by the Russians.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The scope of the Bill—which my hon. Friend will be able to study before long—has been shaped after careful consideration, in the light of the report by Messrs. Hetherington and Chalmers. If my hon. Friend wishes to suggest that that scope be extended, he can no doubt do so when the time comes to debate the Bill.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House give further consideration to the possibility of a debate on the poll tax? Does he recognise the growing anger and resentment that is felt all over the country and is reflected in our postbags? I entirely repudiate any violence perpetrated by a few outsiders; Opposition Members have no time for violence of any kind—*[Interruption.]* I am surprised that I should ever be accused of condoning violence. Why does the Leader of the House not recognise that the tax is the most unpopular that has been introduced for centuries, and that hundreds of thousands of people all over the country—many in Conservative constituencies—are expressing their views and will continue to do so? Now is the time for a debate—in Government time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: By definition, the matter has been debated in the House many times. The tax is in place as a result of the very recent passage of the legislation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be supported by more of his colleagues in his condemnation of the violence. I also hope that he will deliver the message to his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who was reported yesterday as saying that the violence had been generated by the actions of the Government. That is precisely the wrong way in which to condemn violence.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): May I revert to the question of the War Crimes Bill? My right hon. and learned Friend's answer was not entirely clear to some of us. Will he give us an absolute assurance that there will be a free vote?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot speak for the Opposition—but I see hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench nodding. A silent intervention has been allowed to inform me: there will be a free vote on both sides of the House.

Mr. Eric F. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and those of my hon. Friends who have asked for a debate on the poll tax? Many of us are totally opposed to the use of violence, but the chairman of the Tory party, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), has suggested that the violence is the result of the activities of Militant Tendency. Some of us have had, unfortunately, to live with members of Militant Tendency for many years. However, whatever criticism we may make of them, we have never found that they support violence.

[HON. MEMBERS: Oh.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has the right to express his opinion about the matter.

Mr. Heffer: Therefore, I ask the right hon. amd learned Gentleman to provide time for a debate on the issue so that those of us who have known members of Militant Tendency for quite a long time can express our opinions and talk of our experience. Does he not agree that the most militant people on the picket lines at the moment are those people who on television have said that they voted Tory in the past and that they are now ashamed of having done so?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House can find ample opportunities to debate the matter, should it wish to do so, as it has done on many occasions. According to my experience, not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency the most alarming demonstrations that I have ever encountered were on Merseyside, when the demonstrators had substantial support from members of Militant Tendency.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many Conservative Members would not be afraid of a debate on the community charge? Those who deliberately encourage the flouting of the law by non-payment and encourage violence at council meetings when the community charge is to be set support a party that intends to raise local authority expenditure by up to 25 per cent., thus causing hardship for those who have to pay the community charge. It could amount to an increase of as much as £100 per person in Lancashire. Therefore, we should welcome the opportunity to place the blame where it should lie.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for offering support for that proposition. He is right to draw attention to the extent to which high community charge levels are being imposed overwhelmingly by Labour-controlled councils.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the threat to public order from the introduction of the poll tax? Does he not agree that such a debate would allow the Government to understand that people in all political parties—including Conservative Members of Parliament, Conservative councillors and people of no political party—are protesting against the hated poll tax? Would it not provide an opportunity for the Prime Minister, the chairman of the Conservative party and the Leader of the House either to substantiate or to withdraw the serious allegation that 28 Labour Members of Parliament, including myself, are promoting the disruption and disorder?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government of course support the right of people to demonstrate peacefully in respect of or against any action by the Government, or anyone else. However, we do not approve of the action taken by the 28—or was it 31?—Labour Members of Parliament urging resistance to the payment of a tax that had lawfully been put in place by this House. As the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) boasted not many minutes ago, no fewer than 31 Labour Members of Parliament are seeking to resist the payment of the tax.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for an urgent debate on the holding of ballots for the purpose of electing trade union executives? I raise this matter on behalf of one of my constituents, Mr. Alf Mycock. He is a self-confessed Labour moderate who has turned to me for help, and for the help of the House, because he failed with his own general secretary, Mr. Ron Todd, despite the fact that Mr. Mycock had evidence of ballot rigging and serious complaints. He is very concerned, as we should be, in the interests of the general public, because their money was used for the holding of the ballot.

I ask for a debate for the simple reason that Mr. Ron Todd failed to involve the police. I am pleased to say that the police have now reacted to my constituent's request, and I am sure that the House will wish to debate the issue because public money was involved, and we should look to the House to take appropriate action on behalf of my constituent and the public.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure whether I can arrange an early debate on that topic, but the way in which my hon. Friend has put the matter so clearly and comprehensively will serve to put it on record. It deserves to be investigated.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of time and the subsequent debate, may I remind hon. Members that the object of business questions is to ask for debates next week and not to make speeches that might properly be made in those debates.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the Leader of the House recognise that the casual indifference that he is showing to the problem of low wages in the Refreshment Department of the House of Commons is causing deep concern among staff? May we have a debate on the matter, particularly in light of the fact that many people working in the Refreshment Department will have to pay poll tax bills of perhaps as much as £600, depending on where they live in London? They cannot afford it. They want action.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Like other members of the House of Commons Commission, I am aware of some anxiety about the rates of pay of some of the industrial staff in the Refreshment Department, but I am assured that basic wage rates do not compare too unfavourably with those in the catering industry in general. Moreover, Refreshment Department staff now benefit from a non-contributory pension scheme, a four-and-a-half-day basic working week and comparatively lengthy holidays. Of course, the Commission takes account of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman, but he should not continue to present the matter in such a fashion.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On the War Crimes Bill, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the principle of the English common law, affirmed as recently as Tuesday by the divisional court in the matter concerning the actions of police officers at Wapping, that delay in bringing a prosecution making a fair trial impossible is an abuse of the process and will not be tolerated by English courts? If that applies to a five-year delay, how can Parliament possibly authorise overruling that rule when the delay has been 50 years?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend draws attention to one of the points which will require careful consideration in the debate on the Bill. No doubt he will wish to take account of the fact that countries in the Anglo-Saxon common law tradition, such as the United States, which has set aside the Limitation Acts, and Australia and Canada, have legislated in respect of such crimes, notwithstanding the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the fact that there is to be a two-and-a-half-day debate on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. Will the Leader of the House give an undertaking that tomorrow the Government will not object to the private Member's Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) proposing that primary legislation of that nature for Northern Ireland can be dealt with in this House, because the community aspect of the White Paper in Northern Ireland has not yet been properly published?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman will have to wait until tomorrow to see how matters transpire.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider initiating a debate on the community charge next week, so that the Secretary of State can explain to the House whether he is being even-handed in his grant treatment of different London boroughs, such as Lambeth and Wandsworth, and why, despite the fact that the amount going to every adult in Lambeth is £324 more than the sum going to every adult in Wandsworth, the community charge in Labour-controlled Lambeth is nearly four times as much as that in Wandsworth?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend would relish the opportunity to explain that. In the meantime, he will be grateful to my hon. Friend for having made an important point very clearly.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): When do the Government, having been seized of the problem for the best part of 10 years, intend to fulfil their promise to introduce legislation to deal with the problems of maritime archaelogy? It is some time since they received the recommendations of the joint nautical archaelogy policy committee.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government may have been seized of the problem for 10 years; I am afraid I have not. However, I shall look into the matter in the light of the manner in which the hon. Gentleman has expressed his case.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Following the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to try to find an opportunity for the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to come to the House and rebut the scurrilous attack on my local authority—the Conservative-controlled Fylde council—by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)? In an article in *The Times* the hon. Gentleman suggested that the Fylde council had exceeded the Government's target by £110. That is not true; the figure is actually £7. Excessive expenditure in Lancashire is down to Labour-controlled Lancashire county council.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for taking yet another opportunity to make clear the spendthrift policies of Labour-controlled Lancashire county council.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the Leader of the House recognise that the greatest poll tax problems arise not from what the local authorities are doing or from the number of people choosing not to pay, but from the fact that millions of people cannot afford to pay? This is because of the basic unfairness of the poll tax and of other policies that the Government are pursuing. Will the Leader of the House therefore reconsider the need for a debate on this matter? Will he give the House an absolute assurance that, if there is to be any local government poll tax capping, there will be a full debate beforehand on the serious implications of such action?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: When any question of capping comes to be considered, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will act properly in accordance with the law that applies. I take note of how the hon. Gentleman's intervention, like the interventions of many other hon. Members, underlines the extent to which the community charge focuses attention on the level of local government expenditure.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find an early date for a debate on the scenes that occurred in the Walton-on-Thames town hall and in other town halls last night? Walton-on-Thames is within the borough of Elmbridge, which is part of my constituency. Militants incited people to intimidate councillors. It was disgraceful behaviour. These people are now commonly assumed to have been incited ultimately by the 31 Labour Members who are encouraging people not to pay the poll tax. Will my right hon. and learned Friend find a suitable way to bring this matter forward for consideration—perhaps by the Committee of Privileges—so that we may have a decision on how Members who are inciting people to break the law should be treated?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not for me to decide what matters should be put before the Committee of Privileges. As my hon. Friend knows, such matters have to go through the Chair. However, I take note of the important point that my hon. Friend has raised.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Leader of the House satisfied with the way in which the House conducted its affairs yesterday in respect of the Department of Trade and Industry report on the House of Fraser? Is it not very strange that a 750-page report that was the No. 1 item on all the national news bulletins and is on the front pages of all the national newspapers today should have been the subject of a 29-minute statement in the House? Does the Leader of the House agree that the order of priorities that was adopted yesterday makes us look ludicrous, ridiculous and out of touch? Will he please give us an assurance that there will be a debate on this matter?

Mr. Speaker, You said yesterday that the statement was the first stage and that there could then be a debate. Will the Leader of the House make sure that when that debate takes place the Attorney-General will come and listen to it? For some reason, the Attorney-General was not present for the statement yesterday, although he turned up to hear the statement by the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). When it comes to what is really important in this country, what sort of priorities do the Government have?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will understand that this matter came before the House yesterday because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry chose to volunteer a statement on it. Conclusion of that item of business yesterday was a matter to be determined, quite properly, by the Chair in the light of the pressure to consider other matters. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General was not here at that time, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General was here throughout the statement. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be able to answer questions on the matter in the House on Monday.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): May we have an early debate on the Post Office monopoly? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, during the past week, no

collections or deliveries have been made in my constituency? That is causing grave inconvenience to many people. I have yet to receive the Whip for this week but I am here. The monopoly should be broken quickly. May we have an early debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am impressed by the way in which my hon. Friend moves from one item to another. Having asked questions week after week about war crimes legislation, he now moves on to the Post Office monopoly. I dare say we shall have to look forward to questions on that topic for a number of weeks because there are at present no plans to end the monopoly. I hope that my hon. Friend will continue to attend the House, notwithstanding the non-delivery of his Whip.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Prestwick airport and the allocation of North sea haddock quotas are of vital importance to specific sectors of the Scottish economy, yet important statements on both subjects have been made this week through the medium of written questions, thus minimising scrutiny. Does the Leader of the House accept that that is a disgraceful way to treat Scottish matters? Will he consider again the use of written answers to deal with important Scottish matters, and will he arrange for suitable debating time on such matters?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman will understand, I and others concerned with the business of the House always try to identify the right way for announcements to be made. I shall take account of the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. I hope that he will share the general satisfaction and the policy consequences of the announcement about Scottish airports.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Bearing in mind that the European Community must be the most important force for stability in a changing Europe, and given the extraordinary way that it is set up so that it is difficult to hold it accountable to the House, will my right hon. and learned Friend bring forward next week his response to the very large number of requests that he has received for improvements in the procedures by which Members of the House can keep in touch with Members of the European Parliament and with the business of the European Community?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always grateful to hon. Friends who emphasise the importance of improving co-operation between Members of the House and Members of the European Parliament and Community institutions. As my hon. Friend knows, some of those questions are being covered in my consideration of the report of the Select Committee on Procedure, whose recommendations will no doubt be considered by the House in due course.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Despite his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman), will the Leader of the House reconsider having a debate on early-day motion 653?

[That this House thinks that Wales should not be burdened with a Secretary of State who, as a result of his announcement of his intention to resign at some unspecified future date, is limited in his ability to make decisions which bind his successor; points out that this would be an intolerable situation in any Department, but is especially so in a Department with such wide-ranging responsibilities; and calls upon the Prime Minister to end this Whitehall farce by immediately appointing his successor.]

Is he aware of the concern expressed on these Benches about the contempt with which the Secretary of State for Wales treated the House last Thursday, St. David's day, by not announcing to elected Members for Wales his intended resignation? There is great demand in Wales for a successor to be appointed. We do not wish to have a lame duck hanging on; we want a Secretary of State for Wales.

If the Government are in trouble about whom to select, may I suggest that, with his knowledge of foreign affairs and with his clout as deputy Prime Minister, the right hon. and learned Gentleman might consider offering his services so that we can have a Secretary of State at an early date?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is odd to hear a Welsh Labour Member suggesting that one qualification as Secretary of State for Wales should be a knowledge of foreign affairs. As I have already said, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales dealt with the matter as effectively and as sensibly as he could on Sunday. He had no case for doing so on the preceding Thursday. He will continue to serve in his office with the distinction that he has shown in his time there so far.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask the Home Secretary to make an early statement on the mass rioting which has been taking place around town halls all over the country, with people bussed in often from miles away? Clearly the rioting has been fomented by a statement issued on House of Commons notepaper and signed by 28 Labour Members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the part played in that discussion, and the way that it was conducted, by the declared opposition of Labour Members to payment of a tax lawfully in place.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The Leader of the House will no doubt be aware that the talks on Cyprus under the auspices of the Secretary-General have again broken down. As Cyprus is a Commonwealth country and this country is one of the guarantor powers, when are we to have a debate in Government time on that island and its future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the prospect of a debate on that matter in the near future. I assure the hon. Member, and those who naturally follow this important matter, that the House will continue to maintain a close interest in it, as do my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's concern to their attention.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time in next week's business to arrange for the Attorney-General to make a statement to the House on the report of the Department of Trade and Industry published yesterday? As there was less than half an hour to discuss that important issue yesterday, many questions are left unanswered, in particular, how 1,000 illicit copies of a stolen volume of the report were printed by someone called Mr. Sam Evans. He happens to be Adnan Khashoggi's American attorney. That is one issue that should be pursued. It is a matter of grave importance

[Mr. Rupert Allason]

because it circumvented the report's publication yesterday. Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for the Attorney-General to make a statement next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that the existence of copies of a document, which has now been published with the authority of Her Majesty's Government, can be said to circumvent the publication which has now taken place.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I cannot hear.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure whether publication, in the way described by my hon. Friend, of copies of a document that has already been published with the authority of the Government, can be said to circumvent publication that has now taken place. If my hon. Friend wants to ask questions about that matter, he will have a chance to do so when my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General answers questions on Monday.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Leader of the House note that I am adding my voice to that of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry? As one of its members, I think that any debate on the House of Fraser should not be held up because the Committee is looking at the question of company investigation. Will the Leader of the House take on board the disquiet shown on both sides of the House at the shortness of yesterday's statement and the fact that there are many questions still to be answered? As well as wanting the Leader of the House to speak to the Attorney-General to see if he will take part in the debate, many hon. Members will listen with interest to what the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has to say about his role in that sorry affair.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have already said, there will be no scope for a debate on that matter next week. The following week we shall be entering the period of the Budget debate, when some aspects of the matter may be raised. I cannot do more today than say that I shall take note of the number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have raised the issue.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): On reflection, does my right hon. and learned Friend feel that he was less than characteristically generous in his response to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)? Surely we should have a statement, preferably a debate, on the number of Labour Members who are allegedly telling people not to pay their community charge—there is some doubt as to whether the number is 28, 29, 31 or 32. That would also give Opposition spokesmen the opportunity to denounce those hon. Members who encourage people to break the law.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to my apparent lack of generosity. I always try to deal generously with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who has certainly done us a service in emphasising yet again the need for the Labour party to repudiate opposition to payment of a tax which is lawfully in place.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Is the Leader of the House aware that, before the militant tendency of the Conservative party demonstrated in Richmond, the Liberal-Democrat councillors there undertook the most comprehensive consultation anywhere in the country about the budget of that council? Were the Leader of the House to provide time for a debate, that might provide a useful lead in encouraging such consultation in other councils on the setting of their budgets.

While considering such openness and consultation, did the Leader of the House note that the Conservative broadcast on television last night that boasted of the Government's environmental record was immediately followed by a news broadcast citing the criticisms of our European neighbours of the Government's environmental record? That at least seems to be a subject for debate. Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, the complaint of many people appears to be that the Richmond councillors to whom he referred took insufficient account of the consultations on which they embarked. As for the North sea conference, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will no doubt report further to the House and will answer questions in due course

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange an early debate on the relationship between inflation and local government taxation, so that I can put my constituents' case before the House and point out that, although inflation since 1986 has totalled about 20 per cent., during those four years Ealing Labour council has raised its rates and local taxation by nearly 300 per cent.? In addition, that same Labour council has borrowed £200 million, and will have to start repaying that next year. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is on the Front Bench, will have to share that repayment.

Is it not time for a proper debate on the appalling, wicked and unfair expenditure of a Labour council that has raised local taxation by 300 per cent. in four years, and has still not had clearance from the auditing officer for any of its accounts for the past four years?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to his constituents' concern about the high-spending, high-tax policies of the Labour-controlled Ealing council. I believe that I am right in saying that it is the council area where we find the residence of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. Perhaps it is his presence there that is encouraging such fiscal extravagance.

Ms. Mowlam: In view of the number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who this afternoon have stated their concern about not having a debate on the House of Fraser report, will the Leader of the House give a clear commitment that such a debate can be held the week after next? As he said earlier, it is a critical report. Indeed, the Prime Minister said at Question Time that the buck stopped with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. All that hon. Members on both sides of the House want is the chance—which is our democratic right—to get him to answer the questions raised in that report.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already undertaken to consider that question in the light of the number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have raised the matter. I cannot do more than that today.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is real and widespread concern in the country—including among many members of the National Union of Mineworkers—about the recent allegations that the leadership of their union sought arms and money from a terrorist regime to undermine the United Kingdom? If my right hon. and learned Friend cannot find time next week for a debate on that important subject, and as an internal union inquiry would do nothing to allay public concern, and given the sudden, belated enthusiasm of the Leader of the Opposition for distancing himself from Mr. Scargill, will my right hon. and learned Friend inquire through the usual channels whether an Opposition Supply day might be made available to debate this important subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly make such an inquiry, because I am sure that the Labour party wishes to do everything possible to condemn the matters raised in this way.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the Government find time to respond to Chancellor Kohl, who put conditions on the recognition of the existing German-Poland border and alluded to Germans living in Poland? Was that not a most unhelpful and unpleasant statement, which brought back memories of Hitler's claims? Was it not ominous for the future, and does it not put German unification at risk?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Leader of the House may be multi-faceted when answering business questions, but that does not include the making of instant comments on rather far-fetched observations such as those that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): We have heard a number of calls for a debate on the House of Fraser affair and on the shenanigans in the miners' strike of the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers. May I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend that it would be wholly appropriate to have a single debate covering both topics? We need to clear the air on the NUM fiasco, because the leader of the NUM is now giving Yorkshire and Yorkshiremen a bad name.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always open to imaginative suggestions for reforming the procedures of the House, but I am not immediately persuaded by the charms of a debate on both those topics at the same time. However, my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the serious implication of the allegations now made about the affairs of the NUM.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the Leader of the house accept that we understand that he could not commit himself off the cuff to a debate on the allegation voiced by his hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) about 1,000 copies of a report being produced by an American? Will he equally recognise that it is an important allegation? May we ask him, therefore, whether he will make inquiries between now and Monday to establish the accuracy of the allegation and, more importantly, whether that publication took place before the Government's publication of the report? If it transpires that publication took place before the Government published the report, will the Leader of the House ensure on Monday that we have a statement to explain how that arose?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If and in so far as the way in which the point is put by the right hon. Gentleman means that I failed to detect or to acknowledge a substantial point in the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), I shall see that it is brought to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General so that he may be able to answer questions about it, as far as he can, on Monday.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Has my right hon. and learned Friend noticed the reports in the newspapers in the past few days about the growing practice of breeding bandogs—mixtures of pit bull terriers, ridgebacks and Rottweilers, for example—with the express purpose of breeding an especially savage and vicious large dog, and about the apparent liking of the criminal classes for such dogs? Will my right hon. and learned Friend invite the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider the matter and to tell us what he proposes to do about it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend knows that legislation about dangerous dogs was placed on the statute book as recently as last summer. However, recent incidents such as those underlying the reports to which he referred are being examined closely by my right hon. Friends. I shall draw my hon. Friend's question to their attention.

Press Releases

4.38 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you make it clear that for a Minister to issue a press release in which he makes serious allegations against a group of unnamed Members of Parliament without producing any evidence to substantiate those charges is a practice that you repudiate?

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that I am not responsible for press releases.

BILL PRESENTED

War Crimes

Mr. Secretary Waddington, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Brooke and Mr. John Patten, presented a Bill to confer jurisdiction on United Kingdom courts in respect of certain grave violations of the laws and customs of war committed in German-held territory during the Second World War; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 95.]

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the Matter of Welsh Office Policies and Provision for 1992, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Orders of the Day

Food Safety Bill [Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents: The Sixth Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1988-89, Food Poisoning: Listeria and Listeriosis (House of Commons Paper No. 257, 1988-89), the Government's reply to that Report (Cm 848) and the First Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1989-90, Food Poisoning: Listeria and Listeriosis; Follow-up (House of Commons Paper No. 93).]

4.40 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health and the Scottish Office. It seeks to cover the entire food chain. There is no doubt that the safety of British food depends on covering the whole of the food chain, for the chain is only as safe as its weakest link.

We in Britain have safer food now than has been the case in the past. People are able to enjoy a wider variety of diet and they are living longer than ever. So in bringing forward a measure of this kind, we seek to build on the present law, to find ways of meeting the new problems that new techniques of food preservation and handling bring to us and to meet the requirements of the greater accuracy with which we can now discern the parts of food that may be contaminated by such things as listeria.

We now know much more about the composition of food and, because we are aware of the presence of substances about which we did not know previously, we cannot ignore them and we must find ways of meeting the much more stringent demands that the public rightly places on us. To do that, the first step must be to ensure better enforcement. Historically, enforcement in Britain has been through local authorities and I am convinced that there are major advantages in having a local enforcement service.

But there is still the problem that if there is only a local enforcement service, there can be a considerable difference between the way in which the law is enforced in various places. I recently attended a meeting of the Guild of Food Writers and heard a prominent restaurateur describe her experience. Before opening a restaurant, she was told to tile the kitchens in a certain way. After she had opened the restaurant, another representative of the same local authority told her to remove the tiles. Within a year, a further representative paid a visit and told her to replace them.

That sort of dislocation advice given in certain circumstances—even in the same place, let alone as between places—brings the food safety law into disrepute. So although enforcement should be through local authorities, a change is needed to even out the standards over the country as a whole.

We propose to do that through codes of practice by which we hope to bring local authorities' actions and mechanisms into greater conformity without removing the need for local action on local problems, which vary from one outlet to another. That will mean better enforcement, better codes of practice, better training for enforcement officers and, in some local authorities, more enforcement officers.

That will involve more expenditure by local authorities. The Secretary of State for the Environment has agreed that £30 million will be taken into account in next year's rate support grant settlement, enabling us to let local authorities have the necessary resources to do the job properly.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): What does that mean? Does it mean that £30 million will be coming from central Government to cover those costs, or will additional sums have to be raised through the community charge? If the latter, how much of that £30 million will have to be raised in that way?

Mr. Gummer: The money will come from central Government, but, because of the block grant, it is not possible to direct that particular part of the money directly for spending in each local authority. Local authorities will have that extra resource, but they will have to use it and we will seek to make sure, by the codes of practice, that it is used. So the answer to my hon. Friend's question is that it will be an additional resource from central Government.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: All £30 million?

Mr. Gummer: Yes, the £30 million will be taken into account from central Government provision by way of the RSG settlement.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I will give way to my hon. Friend shortly.

What I have described will be paralleled by providing tougher powers for enforcement officers. We must achieve a balance between having the required additional powers to enable local authorities properly to protect the public and avoiding the temptation of having all sorts of fiddling rules being enforced on ordinary business men who are trying to run a reasonable service in a cafe, restaurant or small shop outlet.

The balance between those two is important. The priority must be the safety of the public. We seek to ensure that safety in as unonerous a way as possible, for it would be wrong to encourage the view that every action and movement of people who are trying to provide a public service and earn a living should be monitored in a way which they would find oppressive and which would be counter-productive.

Mr. Gregory: My right hon. Friend is right to refer to the need for environmental health officers to have adequate powers to enforce the law. Has he had discussions recently with the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the inadequacy of environmental health places at polytechnics? If we could overcome that difficulty, the vacancies for environmental health officers in many parts of the country would be filled and the vital piece of legislation that we are considering would be properly enforced.

Mr. Gummer: I have had discussions with the Secretary of State for Education and Science covering a range of matters, including not only the training of enforcement officers but, equally important, how best to ensure that the training of youngsters in the use of food in the home can

adequately be provided within the schools system. All such matters are under review and I hope that that meets the concerns of my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I will give way to the hon. Lady when I have given more details concerning enforcement officers.

Up to now we have been able to take from the shelf, technically speaking, only the product that has been proven to be dangerous, and no other product from the same batch. Happily, that has not caused real problems because in almost every case—as far as I know, in every case—the companies concerned have willingly removed from their shelves any product about which there has been concern.

But that might not always be the case. There may be circumstances in which a company would be unwilling voluntarily to do that. So I feel that I should have power, and give enforcement officers the ability, to insist on the removal of the whole of a batch from the shelves, and of goods that are ready to go on the shelves. There are a number of places in which we have not had those powers. While we have not needed them, because there has been voluntary compliance, we should have them lest such voluntary compliance is not forthcoming.

It is also important to have improvement and prohibition notices. The environmental health officer should be able to demand necessary improvements for the protection of the health of the public and, in severe cases, to say that where there is real danger to public health, a premises must cease trading.

We must, of course, protect individuals from the misuse of such powers. It is of little help to say that it will take us a week or two before we can stop somebody poisoning his customers. So we must have an emergency system, to be used only when utterly necessary. That will be part of the tougher powers that the Bill will provide for enforcement officers.

Mrs. Wise: May I take the right hon. Gentleman back to his reference to the £30 million and ask on what basis the Government arrived at that figure?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Lady is right to ask that question. It was a difficult matter. As she may know, environmental health officers are concerned with housing conditions, noise pollution and a whole range of other matters. So we had first to try to estimate the amount of time and resources necessary for the part of their work that is concerned with food safety. We had also to consider the wide discrepancies in the importance that different local authorities place on food safety and the amount of resources that they already devote to it. We then had to bring into account the money already allowed for.

After that process, and following consultation with various authorities and experts, we decided on the figure of £30 million, which was widely considered to be not unreasonable. I was pleased to discover that that decision had support from all sorts of sources and from bodies that do not normally support the Government. It seems to me that the figure is not far out and it is pretty widely felt that we have tried to meet the requirements. We intend the Bill to work effectively and it will enable us to involve some local authorities that do not use enough resources—even out of block grant resources—for this important job.

Then there is the question of emergency control orders. Suppose that there is a serious danger—the possibility that an outbreak may reach epidemic proportions. That is not necessarily as frightening as it sounds; it could mean circumstances in which a succession of people might be affected by contaminated food. In such circumstances, we need a simpler, clearer, more comprehensive form of emergency control orders, and that is provided in the Bill.

It is vital that we should continue and elaborate the conditions that apply to labelling and to misleading claims. The House knows that extensive work is already taking place in the European Community. We have asked the Food Advisory Committee to consider labelling generally. We also want to ensure that labels provide information that is necessary to protect health. When I deal with irradiation, I shall point to the important part that labelling must play.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: If it is about irradiation, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will wait until I deal with it in my speech.

Mr. Cohen: It is about labelling. Why have the Government dragged their feet for a decade on the labelling of fat, sugar, salt and protein? Will there be measures to ensure that those items, which are crucial for health and diet, are listed on labels?

Mr. Gummer: The Government have done nothing of the sort. We have spent a great deal of time trying to reach an agreement in Brussels—that agreement was finally concluded on 23 February—to ensure that there is comprehensive labelling. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) to attack the Government, but he would be the first to complain if food manufacturing firms in his constituency had to label their products, when imported, competing, products were not labelled. The hon. Gentleman should aim his darts at the right target, and not attack the Government, who have taken the lead in trying to improve labelling and give the public more information.

Enormous changes are taking place in the scientific and technological world. We need to be able to deal with questions arising from genetic manipulation and with the emerging obligations of our membership of the European Community. If we are to do that, we need flexible regulation-making powers so that we can make changes as soon as they are necessary and so that we do not find ourselves lagging behind others. Contrary to the view of the hon. Member for Leyton, we have been in the forefront of food safety and we intend to remain there. The Bill will give us the opportunity.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Before my right hon. Friend leaves that point, and in view of the great change that would be involved in lifting the ban on the sale of irradiated foodstuffs, will he consider amending the Bill to require at least an affirmative resolution of the House before irradiation can be permitted? At present, the Bill provides for the negative procedure to be used.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend would like to hear what I have to say about irradiation. I do not agree with him about the enormity of the change; it merely puts us in line with a large number of major countries. Every piece of irradiated material will be clearly marked, and if

[Mr. Gummer]

my hon. Friend does not want to buy it, he need not. I do not see why we should be too concerned about irradiation. The question is clear, and I hope to deal with it clearly.

First, though, let me deal with the registration of individual companies. I am concerned that in some cases local authorities have been unable properly to protect the public's health because they have not known of the existence of some food outlets. That is a major problem. On the other hand, we must be careful to place only the necessary burdens on industry because otherwise it will not have the flexibility to provide what the customer wants. We need to strike a balance. We are therefore introducing a straightforward procedure whereby food businesses will give their local authorities a few key details on a standard form. They will not have to pay to register.

The register will assist enforcement authorities to assess their task and set their priorities, and under clause 27(2)(c) we have powers to make such registers open to the public. We hope that that will enable us to ensure that a person wishing to open, for example, a sandwich bar will give the authority notice at a reasonable time in advance of its opening—perhaps at the same time as making arrangements for building or planning permission. That will give local authorities the opportunity to take such action as they wish.

Where there is a need for an especially tight control, a licensing system can be used. We have already made it clear that this will apply to dairies and dairy farms, which have licensing-type controls at present, and to premises where the irradiation of food is to be carried out.

The Bill allows us properly to control the irradiation of those foods for which treatment could bring benefit to consumers. It does not, however, usher in irradiation; there is no question of that. That will be achieved by detailed regulations put out to public consultation and laid before Parliament. The regulations will ensure that food irradiation will be allowed only under strictly controlled conditions, which will include the labelling of food both in retail outlets and in restaurants to give the consumer genuine choice. We are already consulting on how that should be done.

Irradiation is a valuable adjunct to our armoury in the fight against food poisoning. It has been confirmed as safe by the World Health Organisation and numerous expert committees around the world. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities' report on the irradiation of foodstuffs says at paragraph 143:

"Irradiation could serve as a useful means of raising the margins of food safety by reducing the contamination of some food by certain organisms".

If people do not want irradiated food, they need not buy it. I am not in the business of forcing or chasing people to buy irradiated food. But, if they want it, they ought not to be prevented from buying it because somebody decides that they ought not to. I want these decisions to be made by the consumers, not the Consumers Association. It is the right of the consumer to decide. Therefore, irradiated food must be properly labelled.

This advantage is already being enjoyed in more than 20 countries. Consumers in France, Belgium, Italy, the United States, Japan and the Netherlands are all able to make a choice, although in many of those countries it is not as clearly defined as we will make it. I believe that our consumers should be permitted the same opportunities. Irradiated food will be labelled and people will be able to choose. It is not for me, as the Minister, to choose; it is for them to do so.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister cited the World Health Organisation in his support, yet the European Parliament working documents say that the WHO expressly stated that the committee of experts had not considered the general safety aspects of the food irradiation process, nor had it claimed that food irradiation was safe or that it had no harmful effects on human health. And, of course, the British Medical Association board of science has objected to the food irradiation process.

Mr. Gummer: WHO not only says that food irradiation is safe but is actually encouraging it; it says that it wants more of it. The hon. Gentleman belongs to a party which used to rejoice in the name "Liberal" and liberal means giving other people choices, not arrogantly asserting that one's own prejudice must be enforced by the law. I am sad that his party of all parties is not going round the country saying that we should give the consumer the choice.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I am certainly not against irradiated food, but I am concerned, as is my right hon. Friend, that people should know when they are eating it, because many people will have fears, whether they are justified or not. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend could explain what safeguards he will give so that people do not eat irradiated food in restaurants and public places, where they may not have an opportunity of seeing a label.

Mr. Gummer: When we produce the regulations it will be necessary for shops and restaurants serving finished food, if I may put it like that, where the label will not be obvious, to state that they are using irradiated food, and the customer will therefore be able to decide. That seems to me to be not in any way unreasonable.

In a world in which more and more people are seeking to make decisions for themselves, it would be a great pity if we decided, in the very important area of food, to take away their right to decide, when it is perfectly safe for them to decide.

I think that it would be extremely difficult not to come to the conclusion that there is no danger to health. I shall certainly buy and eat irradiated food myself and so will my family. Those who do not want it need not buy it.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I think that there is an enormous loophole here. How would this work in practice in, say, fish and chip shops, restaurants or dining rooms in the House of Commons? Does it mean that when I order chicken and chips I shall be given a choice of irradiated or non-irradiated chicken? There will not be labels on the food in a cafe; food cannot be advertised in the menu as irradiated or not irradiated. It is completely impracticable.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman will know, because the law will say that that information has to be made available in a satisfactory manner, and we shall quite properly be consulting the various bodies and people interested in the matter, including the hon. Gentleman, if he so wishes, on the best way of providing the public with a choice. It is difficult to understand how people can say that, because some people do not want irradiated food, nobody shall have it; because some people happen to be

wholly opposed to the scientific evidence, everybody else must give way to them. It is the Jehovah's Witness approach to science—that no matter how preposterous a proposal everybody has to accept it because a small number of people take that particular view.

Mrs. Wise *rose*——

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton) *rose*——

Mr. Alan W. Williams *rose*——

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I cannot give way; I really must move on at this point.

Circumstances change as our knowledge improves. If we had taken the view that some people are taking now, milk would never have been pasteurised. Every argument we hear about irradiation was used against pasteurisation. Yet nowadays we mark only those products that are not pasteurised. I am suggesting that we should mark every product that is irradiated.

There are some areas where those who care most about food safety—and I am one of them—are very concerned that we should have irradiation. At the moment we make safe the herbs and spices that we use by a mechanism which is dangerous and which we have sought to ban but have not been able to ban because there is no alternative method that renders those herbs and spices safe. I am not prepared to continue to endanger operatives and, to some extent, consumers by persisting in the unsafe system. I seek to ban that system once it is possible for people to choose an alternative. This is the only way to meet the changing technology; not to say no to newness from fear of novelty, but to say yes to what is safe and allow others to choose for themselves.

Mr. Gregory: My right hon. Friend says that there is no distinction between a product that is pasteurised and one that is irradiated. I fully take his point about labelling and the importance of that, but scientists are able to undertake a test to show that a product has been pasteurised. How can he, with hand on heart, promote irradiated foods when, in the event of a court case, there will be no test to show whether the product has been irradiated? That invalidates the fundamentals of his argument.

Mr. Gummer: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is not right about that, for these three reasons.

First, if one irradiates food one does something much less to it than if one pasteurises it. It always seems to me to be an amazing argument that, on the one hand, irradiation does so little to food that it cannot be detected and, on the other, what it does to food is so dangerous that it cannot be allowed.

Secondly, there is irradiated food around now. Many countries irradiate food and, because it is illegal to irradiate food in this country, it is much more likely that irradiated food will come into this country, because there is no way that it can legally be controlled. I should much prefer to ensure that if food is irradiated it is done under the very strict conditions that we will lay down, rather than have food irradiated elsewhere sneak in in the way that Opposition Members tend to suggest has been happening.

The third reason why I think that the argument is nonsense is that if I had a scintilla of doubt about whether irradiation was dangerous I would not allow it. But, as there is no doubt that irradiation is safe, I am allowing it.

We will have the tight controls under the Bill to make sure that, where the benefit is clear, irradiation is properly carried out. But there are some other areas in which I would want to move in the opposite direction. With irradiation, I want to make legal something that is at the moment illegal.

There are other areas where I am especially concerned about mechanisms for dealing with food, which I do not think are properly controlled. That is why I have already announced that we shall be issuing draft regulations. The Bill provides the flexibility to introduce the most appropriate controls in all such cases.

One of the areas of which I have spoken in the past, and on which hon. Members on both sides of the House agree, involves mechanisms for preserving food such as sous-vide, where I believe that we must have much tougher regulations. The need for a constant temperature in the entire chain is such that I do not think it is a satisfactory procedure to be used without the strictest of controls, and that is why we shall introduce them.

The involvement of consumers is the most important matter with which my Ministry deals. It is important that consumers should not feel that food safety matters are left to technicians in white coats and bureaucrats in bowler hats. We should not have a society in which the public feel that it is only experts who make decisions and that the people have no part to play. That is why I decided, first, that it was necessary to involve in food safety an organisation that clearly covered all aspects of food safety in the Ministry. That is why we set up the food safety directorate.

Secondly, I decided that we should bring into the directorate the expert scientific panels that advise Ministers, the officials who spend so much time and expertise in advising Ministers, and a consumers panel. I have already announced that there would be such a panel, and today I am able to tell the House that the list of members of the panel will be placed in the Library. The members of the panel will have been selected or chosen by outside consumer organisations, not by myself, so there is no question of their having been hand-picked.

Mr. McAvoy: Of course!

Mr. Gummer: I knew that Labour Members would think that I would do it in that way, so I was careful not to do so. I asked only that the members of the panel should be normal consumers. Most of us want to have the advice of real consumers and not that of those who are becoming professional advisers to all sorts of organisations. I approached a range of organisations, and I am happy to say that all of them have provided me with names, every one of which I am happy to have accepted. There will be coverage of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Therefore, we shall have geographical coverage. Organisations including the Consumers Association and the National Consumer Council have been asked to submit nominations.

Mr. Oakes: How many people will be on the food safety directorate? What will be the total number?

Mr. Gummer: There will be nine representatives from outside organisations, and they will sit regularly with the food Minister, who will listen to their views and put them forward. I hope very much that this system will work effectively.

[Mr. Gummer]

There is a wider consumer concern to which I attach a great deal of importance. I believe that too often and for too long many of the decisions made, especially in the European Community, are not informed by the views of consumers. Therefore, I have established a regular meeting with the leaders of the major consumer groups. They will meet me and consider the changes that are recommended by the Agricultural Council of the Community and in the GATT round, for example. I do not believe that the consumer voice has been listened to properly and regularly on major issues and matters of real priority.

Successive Ministers have met the major consumer groups. Indeed, the first meeting that I had when I was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was with the chairman of the National Consumer Council. I met him before I met anyone else. I have since met the new chairman of the council. I have met also the chairman and senior members of the Consumers Association. I have sought to set an example in that way.

I do not believe that ad hoc meetings are sufficient. It is important to have regular consultation with the leaders of consumer opinion on the major matters that face the industry and consumers generally. I speak of matters of general food safety as well as issues that arise in the Community and in the GATT round negotiations. I hope that the first meeting of the panel of the food safety directorate will take place on Monday 12 March. I am grateful to the members of the panel for accepting membership, and I look forward to a fruitful and open dialogue.

I have written to the leaders of the consumer groups inviting them to attend the first meeting of the wider sort, of which I have spoken, on 3 April. The aim is for Ministers and consumer bodies to discuss constructively and regularly a wide range of complex policy issues that are not restricted to food safety. I hope that in this way we shall find it possible at two levels in the Ministry to have a much more regular association with consumer bodies to ensure that we are making decisions with those organisations' views fully in mind.

It is true that Ministers draw heavily already on independent expert advice, which would never be available to them unless they were part of the body responsible for the entire food chain. For that reason, I end on the point with which I began. There is no point in the Bill, or in any food safety legislation, unless it reflects the food chain from before the seed right through to the finished product on the plate of the consumer. That is why only a Ministry that is integrated—the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—can do the job properly.

The Bill will ensure, with the Ministry working at local level with the environmental health officers and at national level with territorial Departments and the Department of Health, that Britain has food that is safe and which meets all the new requirements that international legislation will demand. It will enable us to face new challenges such as the different sorts of salmonella which now concern us and finding better ways of discovering the presence of disease. We need to have the resources and the ability to take action rapidly in the few cases where there is a real danger to the health of the individual or of groups of people.

I pay tribute to the fact that Britain is, and has been for some years, the leader in food safety in the European Community. I am the only Minister among the current Agriculture Ministers who puts food safety at the top of his priority list. Anyone who suggests otherwise should sit in on some of our debates. In so doing he will learn that often I am the only Minister who raises the matter. I hope that anyone who speaks in opposition to the Bill will bear in mind the fact that Britain is leading the world in food safety. Our job is to put the matter at the top of our priorities in Britain and to ensure that fellow members of the Community put it at the top of their priorities, so that food that is imported from the rest of the Community will be as safe as food that is produced in Britain.

5.18 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The Bill has the stated aims of improving the safety of food and protecting the consumer's interest. The Labour party identifies itself wholeheartedly with those laudable aspirations, but we have serious doubts about whether the Bill can meet those desirable aims and we question whether the present Government, of all Governments, have the commitment or the determination to protect all of us as consumers of food. I concede that this afternoon the Minister made a somewhat more conciliatory speech than we are used to hearing from him, and I hope that that marks a U-turn in Government policy. If it does, he will have the Opposition support.

I was somewhat astounded to hear the Minister say that Britain has the best record on food safety. In the light of the position in which we find ourselves today, that is a staggering claim. How can the Minister make that claim when we are in the middle of the worst food poisoning epidemic since the war? In the past 10 years, food poisoning incidents in Britain have quadrupled to more than 54,000 reported cases in 1989. It is not logical to say that Britain has the best safety record in the world. That reeks of complacency, which has been the Government's record throughout.

The Government's handling of food safety is a classic example of crisis management. They have stumbled from one crisis to another. I hope that the Bill is an admission that they will try to address that problem seriously and come up with a coherent strategy for dealing with food safety issues.

The Government have a lamentable record. They have managed to achieve the almost impossible: they have alienated the consumers and the farmers at the same time, which is an unusual achievement. I was staggered to see that the *Cumberland News*, the Parliamentary Secretary's county paper and not exactly a red-hot Socialist paper, highlighted that fact last week. The article starts with the headline:

"Farmers hit rock bottom. Biggest crisis for 50 years."

That is the opinion of the principal newspaper of the county of Cumbria which is represented by the Parliamentary Secretary. That is a recognition of the position in which the Government have got themselves. The *Cumberland News* has printed that because it knows the difficulties that the Government have got themselves into.

The Labour party will not oppose the Bill at this stage because, as I have said, we hope that the Bill will be improved, and we hope that the Government have changed their course. However, it is unrealistic to attempt to enhance food safety without reforming the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I agree that we need a

food safety policy which stretches from the plough to the plate. That is the Labour party's philosophy. It is our view, and I think that it is a generally held view, that the Ministery has been producer-led for too long and it is time that we had a consumer-led "Ministry of Food and Agriculture". That is the only way to move forward.

I also welcome the Minister's half announcement today of what he calls a food safety directorate. Why does he not go the whole hog, accept the Labour party's policy and have an independent food standards agency? That policy is now supported by a wide range of organisations—environmental health organisations, consumer associations, trading standards officers, and so on. Almost every organisation involved in food health and consumer protection is in favour of an independent food standards agency, at arm's length from the Government. The Minister seems to want change, but he does not want to do anything for the first time. I urge him on this occasion to go the whole hog and to create an independent food standards agency.

Mr. Gummer: How does the hon. Gentleman square that with his statement in "Rural Socialism" that what we need is a Ministry which deals with everything? He said: "from the pre-seed stage right to the plate, there is the risk of contamination, and every one of those points of risk must be blocked up, so it is important to keep food and agriculture together."
If it is the Ministry that is to block those up and if it is the Ministry that is to stop the risk of contamination, how will it deal with an independent body outside?

The hon. Gentleman is trying to do two things. As usual, he is trying to lead people outside to think that they have an independent body, but he would have a Ministry which was in charge of it because he knows that it has to be answerable to the House. It cannot be independent, because in the end the Minister is the independent person answerable to the House and to him, and he would not have it otherwise.

Dr. Clark: The Minister read his intervention, prepared by civil servants, amazingly well, and I congratulate him on his diction. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will answer, but the Minister's contrived intervention does not make sense. The Minister rightly said that we have a plough-to-plate policy, but at the end of the day the Minister is responsible for regulations. However, the advice on which the Minister acts will be from an independent body on the lines of the Health and Safety Executive, which is independent of Parliament and which makes recommendations and carries out certain executive functions while being answerable to the House. That is the way to obtain independent advice, not by regarding the Minister as independent. Only a few people in Britain would regard the right hon. Gentleman as an independent person.

Mr. Gummer: What independent advice that I receive from civil servants or independent bodies does the hon. Gentleman claim is biased? Which of the scientists and independent bodies from whom we receive advice is not honest in that advice? I am sure that the professors and scientists who give us such advice would like to know whom the hon. Gentleman is accusing of giving other than independent advice.

Dr. Clark: It is remarkable how easily the Minister gets worked up. He did quite well in his speech, but he has got worked up very quickly since I have started my speech and the weakness of his case is beginning to show. I thought that towards the end of his speech he had made some progress. He spoke of the need to bring consumers in and made the point that there was another dimension to advice which was not necessarily scientific. In criticising me for wanting more independent advisers, he suggests that I am saying that scientists are dishonest. I am not saying that, but different scientists take different views on the same issue. At the end of the day, the Minister may have to make the decision and sometimes he will have to take into account consumer opinion.

I will give an example. I understand that there are to be 15 members of the Food Advisory Committee and that only two are consumers. That is an advance, because in the past there have been fewer than two. Even the Minister occasionally listens to non-professional advice. In saying that he wants to take the decisions and to be independent, the Minister is beginning to show that his commitment to consumer power is thin. Few people would regard the Minister as independent.

I will move on, as I may be able to get the Minister worked up again later. The Government's record during the past 10 years shows that the Minister has sided with the producers over and over again. The time has come to emphasise the role of the consumer. Chernobyl is an issue close to the Minister's heart—he always likes to get involved in a discussion on that—but it was seven weeks after the Government first learned of the dangerous levels of radioactivity that they actually took action. In those seven weeks, tens of thousands of sheep from contaminated areas went into the food chain. That is the sort of inaction that we have become accustomed to from the Government.

The litany continues. Food poisoning has been a cause of concern throughout the 1980s. Figures for different types of salmonella poisoning—the main cause of food poisoning—show that in the eight years to 1989 salmonella cases doubled. Salmonella enteritidis cases have more than doubled in three years and cases of salmonella enteritidis phase 4, which is associated mainly with eggs, have quadrupled in four years. That has resulted in many deaths. We are not talking about food scares, but about incidents in which people have died. Two hundred people died from salmonella in 1988. In November 1987, the Government knew that there was a problem with salmonella enteritidis in eggs, but no warnings were issued to hospitals—where outbreaks of food poisoning had been linked to raw eggs—for nine months until July 1988, and the Government did not bother to warn consumers about the possible hazards of eating undercooked eggs for 10 months, until August 1988. Again, there were many months of delay.

On the subject of listeria, documents that we are discussing today in conjunction with the debate, such as the Select Committee on Social Services report on food poisoning, mention that public concern about the presence of listeria in food and its health consequences was aroused in February 1989. The number of cases of listeriosis trebled between 1978 and 1980. The Government knew about the problems of listeria in ready-cooked poultry and in some cheeses as long ago as 1987, but no action was taken until the public were warned of the problem in February 1989, which put pregnant women and other vulnerable groups of people at risk. Again, there was a long delay.

[Dr. Clark]

Lead in milk is still a problem in the south-west of England. Early in November 1987 the Government were warned about cattle feed entering Britain, but they waited five days until 6 November before imposing restrictions and, most critical of all, they waited four days before notifying the Milk Marketing Board, which visits every dairy farm every day of the week, so the information was withheld from farmers for four days. For those four days, lead-contaminated feed was fed unnecessarily to cattle due to ministerial indecision and lack of progress.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Representing a constituency in the south-west I must rebut any accusation of incompetence by the Government on the lead incident. They reacted with remarkable alacrity to a serious and widespread emergency. Even the farmers most affected—one farm in my constituency suffered—will give the Ministry full marks for the way in which it acted. No affected milk reached the public.

Earlier, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said that sheep affected by the Chernobyl incident had reached the public. He has obviously not read the Select Committee on Agriculture report, because that is not the case. He cannot go on repeating half-truths as truths. What he says is not true. We are well protected by our Government.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman does well to try to defend the Government, but he does it without great success. He says that no lead-contaminated milk entered the food chain. In the four days that the Ministry withheld information from the Milk Marketing Board, tankers visited the farms and collected the milk, and the milk went into bottles and was sent to London, Birmingham and other parts of Britain.

The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said that no lambs from the radioactive area went into the food chain. I can tell him which abattoirs they went to because 37,598 sheep from those areas entered the key auction mart in Cumbria in that seven-week period. That irrefutable proof has been collected by the Government's statisticians.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am surprised that the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) did not realise that the Select Committee on Agriculture concluded that it was most likely that sheepmeat contaminated by radiation from Chernobyl had got into the food chain as that was in the Committee's report.

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) clearly has a better memory than the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare, as I too know that that is in the report. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare should double-check the work of the Committee, on which he does so much good work.

Mr. Gummer *rose*——

Dr. Clark: I did not intervene during the Minister's speech. Last time I spoke, he intervened seven times. He has already not been able to contain himself for most of my speech today. I ask him to keep his cool for a little longer and to let us make a little more progress.

The other burning issue of the day is mad cow disease. The Government have shown considerable complacency in their handling of that disease. The latest figure is more than 460 notified cases each and every week. Yet the Southwood report stated that between 300 and 400 cases per week was the expected peak. There is clearly a major problem and I wish the Minister to take it seriously. We know that he has been hesitant about taking action. We know that it took him 18 months to make it a notifiable disease and 20 months to introduce a compulsory slaughter scheme.

We also know that it took him two and a half years to announce a ban on cattle offal for human consumption, and it was a further five months before he implemented the ban. Twenty months after making bovine spongiform encephalopathy a notifiable disease, the Minister has only just announced increased compensation to 100 per cent. of the value of the cow. If he had listened to the Labour party, the Liberal party or almost any other group and acted earlier, he would have been helping to tackle the problem.

We realise that this is a serious issue, and my final plea to the Minister is to try to get a more accurate estimate of the amount of BSE in our cattle by using random sampling of cattle slaughtered at abattoirs so that we can see how serious the problem is. The Minister may not regard it as serious, but the majority of British farmers and a large number of consumers do, and the Opposition believe that the Minister should be more responsible about this.

I do not criticise the Government only for inaction. Problems have been made worse by cuts in staff made by the Government *[Interruption.]* The Minister may grunt, but let us consider the actual figures. The Minister rightly says that the main thrust of his food safety policy is being carried out by local authorities through environmental health officers and trading standards officers. We think that that is a sensible approach and we endorse it, but that approach is not made easier—I think that the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) mentioned this—when there are more than 400 vacancies for environmental health officers even before they have to cope with the extra demands of the Food Safety Bill and the Environmental Protection Bill.

As the hon. Member for York rightly said, insufficient numbers of new EHOs are being trained, let alone retrained. That situation has been brought about by the pressure that the Government have put on higher education institutions to cut back training courses. I hope that the Government will do something about that, and that the Minister will talk to his colleagues and get them to break the log jam. It is a similar story for trading standards officers—there is a shortfall of 350 at present, before the new demands of the Act are placed upon them.

How does the Minister intend to make up that shortfall? Members on both sides of the House would like to know. He cannot keep giving more duties to local authorities if he will not give them the wherewithal to carry out those duties.

There is also a drastic shortage of trained veterinarians. Although their role in ensuring that animal diseases are kept in check and not transmitted to humans is increasingly crucial, education arrangements—yet again—have not kept pace with demand. It is ludicrous that only six months ago the Government were actually proposing to close two of our veterinary colleges, at Glasgow and Cambridge.

Mr. Gummer: It was not the Government.

Dr. Clark: It was a Government-appointed body.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman may wonder why I sometimes get a little hot under the collar, but it is because what he has told the House is very far from what really happened. He knows perfectly well that that advice was given by a specialist committee. The Government did not accept the advice and, in fact, did exactly the opposite. As always, the hon. Gentleman presents the public with half-truths. Hardly a sentence of the document that he has read out to us, the contents of which he has spread around the country, stands up to examination. That is why Conservative Members are so angered by his speeches.

Dr. Clark: The Minister is rapidly gaining a reputation as a jack-in-the-box, and it is an apt description.

The committee was set up by the Minister's colleagues. It was asked to make a report, given the financial constraints placed on the universities by the Government. Even after that, it took massive campaigns in Scotland and Cambridge and a great deal of pressure to make the Government stop vacillating and finally change their mind.

As a result of the Government's policy, we are so short of vets that last year we had to import 345 foreign vets —almost one per day—to make up the shortfall deliberately caused by the Government. Closer to home, let us examine the Government's own state veterinary service, which has been at the forefront of the handling of problems such as BSE and salmonella. Between 1979 and 1989, the Ministry has allowed the number of vets employed by the service to fall by 27 per cent. In 1979 there were 580; in 1989 there were 422. The Minister cannot wriggle out of that. It is his direct responsibility, and he has failed in it, as he has in most of the other matters that I have mentioned.

The practical effect of the decline was outlined in a 1989 report by the Ministry itself, which revealed that the efforts devoted to BSE work by the Government's hard-working, assiduous and expert vets had

"been diverted primarily from welfare visits, disease surveillance work at markets and disease contingency planning. Also affected have been medicines visits and visits to meat export plants."

I see the Minister acknowledge that ministerial document. It is clear that vital food safety work has gone by the board due to insufficient staffing under the Government's tutelage.

I hope that it will not embarass the Minister too much if I continue to quote from the report, which reveals a further snapshot of the chaos that the Government have caused:

"a large number of vacancies have been carried in the Division, through recruitment moratoria and delays . . .. This has resulted in a serious contraction in our science databases from which policy is developed and in providing scientific evidence in response to safety issues."

The Government have ignored the advice of their own internal staff, and have allowed both education and staffing to fall behind the nation's health and hygiene needs.

When we start looking into food research, the story gets worse. The House has, of course, debated the issue. The Government-funded institute of food research at Bristol is due to close at the end of the year, and all the staff have now received their redundancy payments. The closure decision is highly regrettable, and the country will rue it.

Even if our Government do not recognise the importance of the institute, others do. Only six weeks after the announcement of the closure of what is probably the premier meat institute in Europe, the Japanese announced that they were to establish an exact replica, and they have written to the authorities at Bristol asking for advice. In a sense, that proves my point better than anything else. I have to say, albeit with some sadness, that the Japanese have an uncanny knack of predicting future demands and needs. Certainly, their predictions are much more accurate than those of the British Government.

Even if the Minister will not take advice from me, from other Opposition Members or even from some of his hon. Friends, perhaps he will take the advice of his own Consultative Committee on Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Research, which has called for

"a substantial increase in the resources available to food research in the light of the social and economic importance of food research and the lack of adequate scientific knowledge on which to base policy."

The committee also voiced

"unease about the standards of food safety within the country. . .Food poisoning is a preventable disease not being prevented. In order to reverse the increase in microbiological foodborne illness and dispel public alarm, there is an obvious need for a significant increase in a co-ordinated effort to control the contamination of food at every point in the food chain from the very start. . .through to consumption."

That brings me back to the whole issue of the Government's failure to tackle the problem. The Bill states that they will work through local authorities, and we approve of that. According to the financial memorandum,

"The additional cost for local authorities is likely to be of the order of £30 million a year from 1991-1992 onwards. This will be taken into account in next year's Revenue Support Grant Settlement."

I ask the Minister to come clean. He seemed to skate over an earlier intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise). What exactly does that quotation mean? Does it mean that £30 million will be given to the local authorities as a whole, or will they be given only a proportion of that sum? It may have escaped the Minister's notice, but there is at present some national disquiet about the whole subject of local payment for services. I understand that in his own local authority, which I believe is Conservative-controlled—as, indeed, is the county—the poll tax is £103 above the Government's recommended level. It will be difficult to blame Labour authorities for that. There is some local curiosity about where the money is to come from. Perhaps the Minister will also tell us how it is to be dispersed among the various local authorities.

Is the Minister aware—the Parliamentary Secretary certainly is—that some authorities, such as Cumbria, contain a number of food establishments but are very thinly inhabited? Will he ensure that they are given extra help, and also that no authority is penalised financially because it already operates a superior food safety regime? The Minister said that he hoped that the Bill would lead to standardisation of the services provided by local authorities. I hope that that means a levelling up and not a levelling down of services, which has been the hallmark of the Government so far. Can the Minister reassure the House that local authorities which provide excellent services will not be penalised? It is a simple request. If he can give us such an assurance, I shall be pleased.

When the Minister made his announcement, it was generally accepted that £30 million might be about right,

[Dr. Clark]

but has he been approached more recently by local authorities? We have carried out a detailed examination and our figures show that the Minister is about 25 per cent. out. Has any work been done to find out the total cost? The city of Birmingham believes that if it is to implement the provisions of the Bill it will need to appoint at least 26 additional qualified staff. With accompanying back-up facilities, that will add about £725,000 a year to the city's budget.

The only contentious provision in the Bill relates to irradiation. Clause 18 enables the Minister to approve irradiation. He has said on previous occasions, and again today, that if the Bill is passed he will allow food to be irradiated. Why does the Minister want to jump the gun? He referred to the very good report prepared by the Select Committee in the other place, which questions why the Government want to legislate in such a hurry when the subject is under active consideration by the European Commission.

The Minister made great play, as he always does, of the need for harmonisation. After 1992, that will not be a luxury—it will be a fact of life. Why is the Minister not prepared to wait for the European Commission to reach a decision on irradiation? West Germany, which does not allow irradiation, Holland which does allow it, and all the other EEC countries will then have to operate under the same conditions. I hope that the Minister will address that serious question.

The Minister also made great play of the Jehovah's Witness approach to irradiation. He is the last person to bring religion into politics. He has the reputation of being a xenophobe. To that reputation he has now added another—that of being a zealot. He is not prepared to wait for a European Commission decision on irradiation. He wants to push ahead on his own because he thinks he knows best. I ask the Minister just to consider whether he might have got it wrong. Australia, Sweden, New Zealand and even the much-vaunted United States are moving away from that technology, but the Minister is trying to persuade us to rush like lemmings into using it.

The Minister frequently refers to the fact that irradiation is permitted in the United States, which is true, but the only items allowed to be irradiated are herbs and certain tropical fruits, and a number of states, including the populous ones of New York and New Jersey, have decided not to allow any food to be irradiated.

We shall wish to discuss the details of irradiation during later stages, but there is massive consumer opposition to it. I understand that only yesterday the Tory-controlled Norfolk county council passed a resolution to the effect that even if irradiated food were permitted in this country, the council would not allow it to be served in any of its school canteens. I suspect that Norfolk will be in the vanguard and that other counties will decide to follow its lead. If our food is so good and wholesome, as I believe that it is, why do we need to irradiate it? That is the $64,000 question.

There are many other issues, such as secrecy, licensing, registration, training and labelling, which we shall seek to raise at a later stage if the Bill receives a Second Reading. However, the catalogue of delays and mismanagement that I have already outlined reflects, in part, the Government's desire not to invest in food safety. I have already suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food needs to be more consumer conscious and more aware of consumer interests. I regret that the Minister did not understand my point when I referred to a food standards agency, but those who write about such an agency and who are connected with the food trade understand it.

As I have already said, we do not intend to oppose the Bill. It is a step in the right direction and we shall try to improve it. Food safety is vital and necessary, but the Government ought to have gone a stage further and been more positive. By means of the Bill they should have promoted the concept of a healthy as well as a safe food policy.

5.55 pm

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I am very pleased to have this opportunity warmly to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister. We need this Bill. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) referred to the time when we first learnt about salmonella in eggs. We have to act on the new scientific knowledge that is now available to us.

For part of my parliamentary career I was concerned with the production end of agriculture. It will be obvious to all hon. Members that I greatly appreciate food. I was also concerned with the drinks trade, but perhaps I ought not to boast about that.

The Bill began its passage through Parliament in the other place. The public have already had an opportunity, therefore, to comment upon it. Amendments to the Bill were made in the other place which have gone some way towards improving it. I have to declare an interest in a food federation. It is to be found in the Register of Members' Interests.

It is unfortunate that by trying to improve food safety we are maligning the nature of our food. I was delighted to hear the hon. Member for South Shields say that our food is good and wholesome. I should like him to repeat that statement on many occasions. Later this evening we shall all have a meal and I know that we will not worry about the safety of the food that we eat. People are confident about the safety of our food. Therefore, my right hon. Friend is right to take comfort from the fact that our food safety standards are among the highest in the world.

Anyone who travels in Europe—I know that some Opposition Members, who are not in their places at the moment, boast about not having a passport—and goes into the kitchen of a French restaurant, the land of haute cuisine, the land which is fussy about good food, will find his hair standing on end because of the bacteriological implications of the manner in which the stock is boiled. Our food is good; our standards are high. Food is there to be enjoyed and we can be confident about its quality and safety. However, we have to contend with such tragedies as Chernobyl. The current regulations do not always cover sufficiently the emergency powers that the Government will have to take in those circumstances.

In many ways the Bill is an enabling Bill because we must have regulations as we must be able to take action quickly in an emergency or a crisis. Although that is covered by clause 17, my right hon. Friend will be more likely to use clause 18 if irradiation is not prohibited in Britain. I know that a Ministry must take account of expert scientific advice based on highly qualified

knowledge. A Government Department cannot really take advice from anywhere except such a superb source. We are bound to accept that experts offer qualified advice. I chide the hon. Member for South Shields because I believe that scientific experts offer impartial and independent advice.

My right hon. Friend has left the Chamber, but I should like to chide him a little too about Jehovah's Witnesses. I could not possibly accept that a Jehovah's Witness attitude would be exhibited by, for example, the women's institutes or the townswomen's guilds as they represent the real consumers. They are the people who do the shopping and, for the most part, cook the food. I do not deny that hon. Gentlemen cook food, but they will know what I mean. Even women such as myself, who have the privilege of being among the few women in the House, spend some of their time making sure that their husbands are well fed and, by and large, buying and cooking the food. Some of my hon. Friends think that I ought to be doing that all the time, but I like to do other things as well. I am a good cook, and I am also immodest.

There is still public concern about what we accept as the evidence of the experts and the qualified scientists. My right hon. Friend will have to take account of the public perception. It may be an erroneous perception, but we still have to deal with it; we cannot bulldoze it. I am much relieved because I know my right hon. Friend and I applaud what he has done to ensure that the consumers' panel will have a genuine role on his food executive because I want real consumers to be involved. There is a danger that consumers can become highly professional. To avoid that we must take account of the perception of the real consumers. I number the women's institutes and the townswomen's guilds among those real consumers.

I know the consultation processes of my right hon. Friend's Department. The hon. Member for South Shields is fair and knowledgeable about that and I know that he will join me in applauding the consultation processes that are involved by statute in that Department. I welcome the way in which my hon. Friend will bring in the consumers' view. The regulations must come before the House and the consumers' panel will have an input. Whatever the expert view on irradiation, we must, with education, information and consultation, ensure that the public understand the advantages and the assurances that have led Ministers and experts to reach their conclusions.

I am the chairman of the all-party retail trade group and I approve of the way in which the new regulations will take into account production as well as retailing and the consumer. Environmental health officers have always felt that it is valuable to get at the production end before the products reach the retail trade. That is extremely important. I have no doubt that some parts of the Bill will be hotly debated in Committee. "Deemed due diligence" is a mouthful which is still of some concern among those who will be confronted by the legislation. It is marginally better than "due diligence", but I have no doubt that it will be thoroughly debated in Committee.

I believe that my right hon. Friend has brought to the Ministry a great personal feel for listening to consumers. I applaud that. I was sent to serve in the European Parliament briefly when consumers really did not have too much voice in Europe. The European Parliament was a producer-oriented organisation. At least now consumer organisations are allowed to look at the proposals of the CAP early in each of the pricing years. I counted that as a small victory, but my hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am not sure that the rest of Europe has moved along too much, and it is most significant and right that we should set our partners in the Community a high example, as we do in food standards.

My right hon. Friend referred to labelling. My first concern was that irradiated food should be labelled so that people could choose. I seek an absolute assurance from my right hon. Friend that people will not be able to eat something that is irradiated and not properly labelled. That worries consumers. People must have the ability to choose not to eat food which is irradiated and they must be certain; otherwise, labelling will be brought into disrepute. I have no doubt that in the Minister's reply to the debate and in Committee those reassurances will be forthcoming.

I welcome the clause about training. There is a very big gap. I worry about the teaching of home economy in schools. Although I know that the Ministry produces a helpful educational book on food and the handling of food, it should liaise closely with the Department of Employment and the Department of Education and Science in relation to new food technologies and the new hazards. Schools should concentrate on the handling of food and food technologies. We all know about the scare involving microwave ovens. I often speak to people in the food business who tell me that they even have to advise their own wives on the correct temperature for the refrigerator. I have had to ask questions about chilled foods. These new technologies are not understood instinctively, so it is necessary that home economics courses in schools should provide a good programme to fill the gap.

I do not often share my worries with the Opposition, but I say today that one of my worries concerns the need to be certain that we have enough enforcement officers. If we are to reassure people about irradiated foods, including correct labelling, those foods will have to be tested occasionally. I welcome my right hon. Friend's promise that £30 million will go towards the provision of more enforcement officers. I hope very much that he and the Department will be able to secure the necessary training and retraining of professionals in this very important career.

I wish the Bill a fair wind. I do not think that it will have many opponents, and I am sure that any small disagreements will be ironed out in Committee.

6.11 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I agree with very much of what was said by the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) and especially with her remarks about education in food and food hygiene—a matter about which I shall say more later. I agree even with the hon. Lady's welcome for the Bill. Indeed, I think that the legislation is welcomed by most Opposition Members. However, the function of an Opposition is to concentrate on the bits of legislation that they do not like. There are in this Bill considerable improvements on the existing situation, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said, the Department is to be congratulated on that. If it were otherwise, why should we have a one-line Whip? The fact that we have a one-line Whip implies Opposition agreement with what the Bill sets out to do.

I am not as happy about the idea of a food standards agency as my hon. Friend seemed to be. The Government

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

have increasingly brought this difficulty on their own heads because of the suspicion that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is an utterly producer-orientated Department. Opposition Members, the press and Members of Parliament certainly feel that the Ministry is the mouthpiece of farmers and producers. It may not be so, but that is the impression that has been created, and events of just over a year ago reinforced the view.

When the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) spoke up and told the truth, a hail of vituperation descended upon her, and in the end she lost her job. Clearly, that was the result of the stand taken by producers, aided and abetted by the Ministry—indeed, the Government—and by the National Farmers Union. The hon. Lady is a redoubtable political fighter, and, like any other political fighter, she can be a political in-fighter if her back is to the wall. The action that she took caused horror among some hon. Members, but if she had not acted in such a dramatic way, we might not have got this Bill. It might have been left on the shelf somewhere. In any case, it would not have been so forceful and so strong.

The public and the Consumers Association have talked about an independent food standards authority. I am attracted by the idea, so picturesquely put, "from the plough to the plate". I wonder whether the Ministry, could help itself in this respect. If it is genuinely interested in the consumer, if it has turned over a new leaf, if the consumer is its foremost concern, let it have a look at its own title —the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. "Food" seems to have been dragged in almost as an afterthought.

When I was a youngster during the war we had a Ministry of Food. Why is this Ministry not called the Ministry of Food? "Food" is the generic term and would bring in agricultural and fisheries. That title might remind Ministers and civil servants that their primary duty to this House and to the nation concerns food itself, and not necessarily food producers, processors, retailers or, in the case of fisheries, catchers.

I pay tribute to the Government for the way in which the Bill was handled in Committee in another place. I am an honorary vice-president of the Association of County Councils, and an honorary vice-president of the Environmental Officers' Association. In view of yesterday's debate, I lay heavy stress on the word "honorary". The Association of County Councils is certainly well satisfied with the progress made in another place. As hon. Members will know, the county councils, along with the district councils, are to be food authorities. The Minister will decide eventually which duties should be allocated to which councils, and the sooner the better, because a local authority likes to know fairly well in advance what it is to be doing in the future.

The Food and Drink Federation, which I realise may well consist of the big boys of the industry, is also basically very satisfied with the legislation. Indeed, it has given the Government considerable co-operation. It does, however, have one nagging doubt, as, even without legislation, it has been so co-operative in allowing whole batches of food to be taken away, at loss to its members, the Government should look again in Committee at the question of compensation. We are not dealing with the odd tin but, possibly, with a whole batch of food. The compensation ought not to come out of the £30 million, though that is a matter about which I shall say more in a few moments.

The Government should display some sympathy towards the Food and Drink Federation, which has been so co-operative on the Bill. Indeed, it has co-operated whenever there has been a food scare, whether as a result of a maniac threatening to put glass in baby food or as a result of some genuine fault.

My primary worry concerns finance. Last autumn the Government allocated £30 million to local government for the purpose of implementing the Bill. Presumably that figure, like others, was based on an inflation rate of about 4 per cent. per annum. I do not think the figure has been revised since the autumn, when the Bill went to another place. Perhaps it could be looked at again.

As the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and others have said, there is a severe shortage of environmental health officers in this country. It is not just a question of our being unable to train officers; it is also a question of the salaries that they receive for the enormously onerous job that they do. They are concerned not only with food, but with housing standards and all manner of other things. People qualified to do all these things cannot be found for the sort of salary that environmental health officers are offered. We really must give some thought to those salaries and to whether the £30 million that I have mentioned is appropriate.

Clause 24 encourages food authorities to provide education and training for all those who are connected with food. That is imperative. As has been said, a lot of what has gone wrong has been due to ignorance of modern food processes. How many people know that chilled food that has been taken out of the freezer must not be put back? The hon. Member for Medway may know that kind of basic thing, my wife may know it, and I may know it, but many youngsters do not. The clause refers to

"persons . . . involved in food businesses, whether as proprietors or employees or otherwise."

Surely the words "or otherwise" imply all of us. As we all eat, we are all in some way involved in the food business.

The hon. Member for Medway rightly mentioned education. It is a question not just of training employees, or proprietors, or cooks, or waitresses—of course, it is important that all those people be trained—but of training everyone in the education system in food hygiene as a basic science. In my day at school it was called cookery; that shows how near my "sell by" date I am. Then it became domestic science. Now many schools do not have the subject on the curriculum. It used to be confined almost exclusively to girls.

Every girl and every boy should be trained at school in food hygiene, for various reasons. On the sad side, we have a divorce rate of nearly one in three. After divorce we have the sad prospect of men with no idea of what to do about food. In the past they have left it to their mothers, and then to their wives. They do not know how to cook, and they know nothing about food hygiene. On the good side of the equation is the fact that most young people, when they get married and even when they have youngsters, share the preparation and cooking of food. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) pointed out at Question Time, this is international women's day. Whether or not their wives go out to work, it is right that men should do their share of the housework.

It is not in the direct province of the Minister of Agriculture, but I plead with him to ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to consider the inclusion of food and food hygiene in the curriculum for every boy and girl. Many of the present difficulties arise from a complete lack of understanding not only of modern techniques but of ancient techniques. People know nothing about food. Training in food hygiene at school would help to solve the problems of food authorities. If youngsters had a basic knowledge there would be less difficulty in training them as chefs or to work behind a meat counter on a market stall.

On the vexed question of irradiation, I share the same view as my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields. There is no need to irradiate good, wholesome food. If the food is not good and wholesome, we have no business to be selling it to the public. So the whole thing becomes a vicious circle. I am surprised at the tenacity with which the Minister holds to his views on irradiation. He mentioned particularly herbs and spices. I would not go to the stake over the irradiation of herbs and spices because there might be a need to irradiate them. What worries me is the irradiation of fish, chickens, meat and fruit. In the United States irradiation is confined to specific categories of food. The Minister should consider, when making regulations under clause 18, limiting severely the number of categories to which irradiation may apply.

I was dissatisfied with what the Minister said about consumer choice. The consumer will not have a choice unless food is marked in a supermarket. Certainly the consumer will not have a choice in a cafe, a restaurant or a pub. The Minister said that food would have to be marked. Will the proprietor of a cafe, restaurant or pub do that? It may happen in large restaurants but not in a small cafe. The pub landlord will not do it. The consumer will not have a choice between irradiated chicken and non-irradiated chicken.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Why not?

Mr. Oakes: Because the proprietor will not say; if he does not tell the consumer that the food has been irradiated, how is the consumer to find out? The Minister admitted that there is no way to test whether food has been irradiated. He used the example of pasteurisation. Any scientist can tell whether milk has been pasteurised but no way has yet been discovered for an environmental health officer to find out whether food has been irradiated. Until that is possible, regulations should not be brought in. We should at least wait until we see what Europe does. The Minister is acting with undue haste, and certainly against the views of the public.

The hon. Member for Medway mentioned women's institutes. Earlier today we heard about people being militant. Women's institutes are not usually militant but they feel militant about irradiation because people will have no choice. The Bill is not giving choice to consumers; indeed, it is taking choice away from them. We do not want to store up difficulties and problems for the future under the guise of a Food Safety Bill which may be known as the food danger legislation in 10 years, after further research has been done. Therefore, I plead with the Government to consider again the vexed question of irradiation.

6.26 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I welcome the broad sweep of the Bill and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on his recognition of the enhanced role of local government environmental health officers. I thank him for the £30 million that is to be provided.

However, there is concern that the Bill, if unamended, will make possible the sale of irradiated foodstuffs without Parliament having any further opportunity of debating the matter and voting on it. I am sure that the Minister will appreciate that the matter is of too great consequence and public concern to be dealt with under the statutory instrument procedure provided for in the Bill. For that reason I ask him to agree to accept an amendment which would require at least an affirmative resolution of the House before the irradiation of foodstuff was allowed.

Irradiation of food arouses understandable concerns which have been articulated, as my hon. Friend mentioned, by the Consumers Association, townswomen's guilds, women's institutes, the London Food Commission and the public. Although the Minister may attack those who voice concern, the Ministry itself has viewed the potential dangers as sufficiently serious for his predecessors to ban the irradiation of foodstuffs. That ban continues to this day. The Minister has announced his intention of lifting the ban and, indeed, has gone out of his way to make himself the champion of irradiated food.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends who are in charge of the Bill to pause for thought before going ahead with these proposals and to consider whether this is the moment to stir up a new hornets' nest of potential anti-Government discord. Are the Government really riding such a crest of a wave of popularity that they can afford to have arrayed against them an entirely new and wide-ranging coalition of forces? Where is the groundswell of public opinion demanding the irradiation of food? The Minister mentioned that the World Health Organisation is in favour of it and it has been suggested that possibly a single supermarket chain will also welcome the move. However, there is no popular demand for it. The overwhelming majority of individuals who have been polled on the issue state that they would be unlikely to buy irradiated foodstuffs.

Food growers and manufactuters, together with supermarkets, have gone to enormous trouble and expense to supply the housewife, on a day-to-day basis, with a vast range of fresh and wholesome food. It would be regrettable if the House were to do anything to undermine that arrangement. Inevitably, there is concern that allowing irradiation will provide the cowboys of the food trade with an opportunity to extend the sell-by date of foods or, in other ways, allow food to be sold which could not be sold legally today. That would provide unfair competition for those supermarkets which refused to carry such produce.

The Secretary of State has made much of the requirement for clear labelling, and I warmly welcome that commitment. However, he well knows that a significant majority of consumers want nothing to do with irradiated foodstuffs. Therefore, there is a clear commercial interest for a manufacturer, unscrupulous retailer or restaurateur to remove the irradiated food label. How can the consumer be protected against such sharp practice unless some test is available to establish whether food has been irradiated?

[Mr. Churchill]

Our greatest anxiety must focus on the safety of irradiated foods. Not enough is known of the potential dangers to humans from continued consumption of irradiated food over a significant period. The Minister's experts advise that the process is entirely safe, but they can give no evidence to show that such food has been consumed by humans on a regular, long-term basis over a significant period. I beg my right hon. Friend to consider that the advice of his experts may be flawed and in 10, 20 or even 30 years' time his successor in office may be given entirely different expert advice about the safety of this process.

We cannot ignore the experience of Sellafield over the past 30 years. There, the experts' advice about what constituted a safe level of exposure for workers engaged in the nuclear industry has had to be drastically revised recently in the light of experience—an experience that seems to have left a legacy of children stricken with leukaemia.

My right hon. Friend declares that if he had a scintilla of doubt about the safety of irradiated food he would not be recommending it to the House. I am sure that he is sincere when he says that, but he cannot deny that scientific data on the effects on humans of eating irradiated foodstuffs over many years is non-existent. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend consider the possibility that, in years ahead, there may prove to be unforeseen side effects of the introduction of irradiated foods into the national diet? I urge caution.

Will my right hon. Friend at least consider delaying going ahead with these proposals until there is an agreed European Community directive on the subject and an effective irradiation test? Certainly both those moves would be warmly welcomed by the various groups outside the House who are concerned about the process and to which reference has been made today.

6.34 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I represent the political arm of the Co-operative Movement and am sponsored by it. That fact is declared in the Register of Members' Interests, just in case any Conservative Members are in doubt.

The Co-operative trade movement, particularly its consumer-owned wholesale and retailing arm, welcomes the Bill because it intends to increase consumer protection and encourage reputable food businesses. It welcomes the way in which the Bill strengthens the powers of local enforcement officers in the clauses covering improvement notices and prohibition orders, with a wider definition of unfit food and a new emphasis on safety enforcement in factories as well as shops.

As a Scot I welcome the creation of a single Bill covering England, Scotland and Wales. I know that the orders will also cover Northern Ireland. I share the Co-operative Movement's view that the Scottish system of enforcement is superior to that in England and Wales. I particularly welcome the introduction of compulsory training for food handlers, mentioned by the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner). The Co-operative Movement, in common with other reputable food retailers, has long campaigned against the current position where someone can set up in the food business without the slightest training, even in basic hygiene. That must be wrong, and we welcome the change.

Some questions still remain to be answered. Debates in another place and tonight's debate have given considerable time to the issue of food irradiation. However, there has still been no satisfactory answer to why the Government want to jump the European gun and legalise the process before they are forced to do so by the European Commission.

I echo some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). There is a limit to the assurances that scientific research can give about irradiation. Ultimately, the effect of long-term consumption of irradiated food by humans can be assessed only over a long period. In addition, some minority groups may choose diets with lots of irradiated foods, but that can only be tested practically. I do not like to refer to him when he is not present, but the Minister kept saying that there must be choice. Surely the Government have a duty to ensure that they give the public a safe choice. That is starkly missing from what the Minister has said so far.

Undoubtedly, there is considerable consumer concern and opposition to the irradiation of food. At the Co-operative congress, several Co-operative members stressed that concern. People are people, and those doubts and fears could well override the scientific arguments on safety—we have seen that demonstrated in the move for additive-free food. The consumer will need to be convinced of the benefits of irradiation and assured that irradiated foods are not harmful. I again echo the sentiment of the hon. Member for Davyhulme that today's assurances may be tomorrow's liabilities. The Minister has still not addressed that worry. I hope that he will respond to it later.

Some new questions have arisen since the debate in the other place. The Richmond report on the microbiological safety of food calls for the licensing of some food shops. That seems to be contrary to assurances given by Ministers that food shops would have to undergo only a simple registration process after they had opened. I support the licensing of all food production premises. Do the Government intend to license anything other than irradiation?

There are other issues that are not covered by the Bill. Consumer education—enabling shoppers to keep up with the ever-increasing pace of change in food technology—is not even mentioned in the Bill or, as far as I can make out, in ministerial statements.

My greatest concern is that there is a great hole at the Bill's centre—it has been well emphasised even in the short debate we have had—down which all the Government's good intentions may disappear. There is no guarantee that any of the new powers will be used. There is every probability that in some parts of the country they will not be used and that where they are used they will be applied inconsistently.

The Government do not enforce the food safety laws; the local authorities do. Powers old and new are split between the relevant local authorities, and enforcement officers are divided between the three professions—environmental health officers, trading standards officers and public analysts. The European Community is about to add to that by insisting on the involvement of vets. The Government are giving this diffuse and unco-ordinated enforcement structure a whole set of new powers and

priorities, but they have not taken a single step to interfere with the patchwork of local authority powers and bring about a single profession of food safety inspectors.

All they are doing is putting another £30 million in the revenue support grant for local authorities. I have yet to hear what assessment was made to reach that figure. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) mentioned how much the city of Birmingham, as one authority, would require. We have still not heard from the Government what criteria or assessments were used to arrive at the figure of £30 million. That seems to be a drop in the bucket. It is a reflection of the Government's rhetoric that they are concerned about food safety, but they are not willing to ensure that it is enforced correctly.

I support the democracy of local government. Bearing in mind the importance of food safety, there is nothing in the Bill—although I stand to be corrected—to ensure that local authorities spend the amount that they receive on food safety inspection. That is the weak link in the Bill.

In short, the Government can put the Bill on the statute book, but they can only hope that it will be implemented. That is a reflection on them. The gap in the Bill between intention and implementation is the essence of the case for an independent food safety agency—a proposal that has wide support from consumers, retailers and enforcement officers. Such an agency could be given powers of co-ordination of local enforcement effort, of suggesting to the Government how regulations should be drafted, and of allocating resources so that districts with a larger number of food factories are not overstretched in the allocation and distribution of their resources. The agency would be a sharing of power by all those directly involved—consumers, local authorities, the enforcement professions and food businesses. Those are the people who know about food. They depend on each other for the food chain to work and for it to be safe.

Ministers seem to resist that idea, partly because of dogma. Part of the reason for that dogmatic attitude is that they are clearly afraid to go to the Prime Minister and suggest public involvement in that area, as it would be viewed in the narrow tunnel vision pertaining in No. 10 Downing street as another quango, and the Minister who had the guts to say that would be sacked.

The Government cannot ignore two facts. The model of an independent agency answerable to the Government and to Parliament already works in the comparable area of health and safety at work. The Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive have proved their worth, even though they are starved of the Government funds that they deserve. They operate by using the local authorities as their agents. That model would work for food safety.

The other fact that the Government cannot ignore is that the job of co-ordinating the level of enforcement—the number of inspections made by each local authority—will be carried out soon. The Government accepted the responsibility for doing that when last June, in the European Council of Ministers, Britain voted for the official inspection of foodstuff directive to become law. That directive lays down in article 11:

"By 16 October each year, and for the first time in 1991, the Commission shall transmit to the member states a recommendation concerning a co-ordinated programme of inspections for the following year."

Within 18 months, the Government will have to set down a co-ordinated programme of food inspection. They will have to take powers to compel local authorities to do what they say. That is what clause 18 of the Bill is about. The Government cannot pose as defenders of local government autonomy. They will have to do the job of co-ordination. How much better it would be if that job had been handed over to a properly accountable body consisting of all the people and interests involved. Instead, the power imposed by the European Community will be handed to the same Ministers whose secrecy and complacency were the biggest single contribution to the food safety scandals that the Bill is supposed to resolve.

6.46 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on making the best fist he could by using only half the facts and one or two lines from the Select Committee report. He laid great emphasis on the fact that 38,000 lambs were sold between 2 May and 20 June. As he may remember, his hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) and I served on that Select Committee. He was right to say that 38,000 lambs were sold, but the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said in evidence:

"the animals who were going to slaughter were mature animals who had put on most of their body weight before the Chernobyl cloud arrived; these animals were not showing high caesium levels."

In fairness to the hon. Member for South Shields, I point out that that section—for the benefit of the hon. Member for Carlisle, it was paragraph 33—then said:

"the balance of probabilities would tend to indicate that some lamb above the limit entered the food-chain before 20 June. But we do not believe that significant numbers are likely to have done so, for the circumstantial reasons given by the Ministry."

I do not want the hon. Gentleman to think that we took only the word of the Ministry on that, because we went into it thoroughly. The Select Committee went to Carlisle and Bangor and also took evidence throughout the country to determine exactly what had happened, and that was the Committee's conclusion. The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), who was the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Martlew: I do not wish to mislead the House, but examination of the evidence led the Committee to conclude that lambs above the irradiation limit may have been slaughtered. Therefore, it is highly probable that some were.

Mr. Marland: I am not denying that some were; it is the number that I am disputing. The hon. Member for South Shields claimed that 38,000 lambs went into the food chain——

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): It is misleading.

Mr. Marland: I agree.

Dr. David Clark: I said, very carefully, that 37,598 sheep from areas of high radioactivity entered the abattoirs in the restricted area. It does not matter about the numbers, because the hon. Gentleman and I are at one on the probability that some contaminated sheep entered the food chain. However, the Ministry knew seven weeks in advance about the statistical radioactive level. If it had imposed restrictions then rather than dilly-dallying, no contaminated sheep would have entered the food chain.

Mr. Marland: The hon. Gentleman has a silver tongue and, once again, is doing his best to exaggerate the position. There was a great deal of exaggeration throughout his speech. I have the facts, and they put a quite different light on the matter from that suggested by the hon. Gentleman. One reason for much of the concern about radiation and irradiation is that people are not 100 per cent. sure of the facts.

The hon. Member for South Shields heavily criticised the Government for doing too little too late, which is a tune that we often hear. I represent a Gloucestershire constituency, as the hon. Gentleman may know. As other hon. Members have done, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the way in which he reacted on the question of lead in animal feed. A representative of West Midland Farmers, a large agricultural co-operative in my constituency, telephoned me to say that the Minister had over-reacted massively and that the restrictions were too strict. My right hon. Friend has said rightly that we want to be sure in these matters. That has been the way in which he has sought to run his Ministry, so the Opposition's criticism is unfair.

We all agree that fresh food is the best; there is no doubt about that. Nevertheless, there is a place for the irradiation of food. My hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) said that her husband did the shopping. I do the shopping sometimes. If I buy fresh prawns and put them in the refrigerator, they do not seem to last long. If I bought irradiated prawns, they would last a couple of extra days and I should welcome that. Irradiation does not make bad food good because it does not change the nature of the food. If food is to be preserved through irradiation, it must be good food before it is irradiated.

We have received letters on irradiation and I am sure that Opposition Members have, too. Many of those who have written believe that the irradiation of food is a fundamentally sound practice and it is widely approved by the trade, although I accept that there are a few doubters. The word "irradiation" does not even appear in the Bill and it does not give permission now for food to be irradiated. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary agreeing.

There has been massive overstatement in the Opposition's speeches. I accept that groups such as the National Federation of Women's Institutes are concerned. The NFWI has lobbied me, as it has other hon. Members. It has listened too much to the speeches of the hon. Member for South Shields, which are enough to terrify anybody. He has obviously had a strong effect on the NFWI. The London Food Commission was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). We must look for a slightly more accurate and reliable source of information than that. It is so discredited that it has even changed its name.

My right hon. Friend is merely making it possible for irradiation to take place at a later date. I agree, as other hon. Members have said, that if we are to irradiate food, it must be carried out to the same standard. We should have Euro- standards. There has been a heck of a lot of disadvantage for our farmers. As we have to declare our interest in debates, I must say, as many hon. Members know, that I am involved in farming. The fact that we have higher standards than those in Europe has put our egg producers in a difficult position. We have been through the dreadful problem of finding salmonella in eggs, yet British eggs are now unidentifiable from imported eggs in the shops.

I was extremely pleased to read recently in *The Daily Telegraph*—always a reliable source of news—that the Israelis have discovered a way of spraying advertising messages on to eggs. I read that one can now buy Israeli eggs that have the words "Drink Coca-Cola" sprayed on the shell. I am hopeful that that technology will be used by our egg industry to enable it to put "Laid in Britain" on British produced eggs.

There is an undoubted need to take extra precautions on food safety and the move towards that is consumer driven. Much consumer feeling has been caused by an inaccurate understanding of the situation, as was the case with eggs, and I hope that some action will be taken. Consumers are interested in a system through which they can feel that food is 100 per cent. safe. Irradiation may be one way to achieve that.

The microbiologists have much to answer for on this matter. There is no doubt that some microbiologists—and we come into contact with a few in the Select Committee—are a good deal more interested in promoting themselves than in promoting safe food. We hear a great deal of drivel from some microbiologists. Most recently, they said that we should ban tomato ketchup and brown bread because there was something wrong with those products. How ludicrous! Furthermore, there is confusion in the minds of many consumers because they believe that if they eat irradiated food it is like eating nuclear waste from Sellafield. It is utterly different. Consumers need to be educated about the benefits of irradiating food.

How many hon. Members and how many members of the public know that surgical dressings are regularly irradiated? If one cuts oneself or suffers an injury, the surgical dressing will have been irradiated before being applied to the arm, or whatever. What reaction was there when salted beef was first introduced? I bet that there was a heck of a response from some consumers who believed, for some reason, that it was probably dangerous. Perhaps in the fulness of time the hon. Member for South Shields will tell us about that. The industry and informed opinion believe that irradiation probably has a part to play in keeping food in this country and in the rest of Europe safe.

As other hon. Members have said, labelling is vital. I am not sure exactly how restaurateurs will label chicken, for example, if it has been irradiated. Without doubt, an answer to that problem will be developed in the fulness of time. Those who produce organic food are quick enough to label it if they think that there will be some advantage to them. I am sure that, even in the most difficult circumstances, we shall find a way to label irradiated food. I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Minister say that the World Health Organisation approved of irradiating food.

As other hon. Members have said, training in the shops and in the home on how to handle food in various circumstances is vital. Frozen food is sometimes thawed too quickly. Food is sometimes handled with dirty hands or is stored incorrectly in the refrigerator which gives rise to a great deal of infection in food. I do not know about the future training of environmental health officers, but I believe that they should be trained as well. Some environmental health officers came to tell the Select Committee about salmonella in eggs, and I was shocked to realise how little they knew about the subject.

The registering of food premises will also help to raise standards. Our standards must be Euro-standards, and all local authorities must abide by the same standards. There is nothing more confusing than for local authorities to be left to their own devices in interpreting regulations as they see fit. My hon. Friend the Member for Medway spoke about one officer telling a restaurant to fix tiles in its kitchen and another telling it to to take them down. Such woolly thinking is no good to anybody. We must have regulations that everyone can understand.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I wholly agree with what my hon. Friend says. However, the anecdote that he recounted was told us by our right hon. Friend the Minister. He told us that the two incidents occurred in the same restaurant, so it is not a question of national standards, and where the standards are set will not alter that fact. What is important is that an adequate standard is set for all environmental health officers to follow, wherever they are.

Mr. Marland: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He has put the position more clearly than I did.

I welcome the Bill. It is important to remember that it will not allow the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food automatically to introduce food irradiation. I hope that the passing of the Bill will reassure consumers about that and that people generally will become educated about irradiating food.

7 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The issue that we are debating has been in the public eye for a considerable time. Following the passage of the Food Act 1984, the then Minister issued a consultation paper for possible further legislation, but not until 30 October 1987 were the areas of such legislation identified.

It was all the more disappointing when, in July of last year, the resulting White Paper was issued, for it was almost devoid of content. It contained 68 pages of self-congratulation and only five pages of proposals. As I read it, I was not filled with optimism about what would be in the Bill that was to follow.

I confess that when the Bill appeared it was an improvement on the White Paper. I was surprised at that, because one would normally expect a White Paper to give an idea of what would be in a Bill. Nevertheless, although the measure is a great improvement over the White Paper, it does not go anything like far enough. The public were led to expect the Government to introduce a major measure in response to difficulties that had arisen, particularly over food poisoning.

The Bill contains only one fundamental flaw, and that has been the subject of most of the debate. It opens the way for food irradiation and for other new processes to be introduced, an issue to which I shall return. I wish first, however, to note some of the major elements of the Bill, many of which I welcome.

The Bill would revise the main offences in the existing Food Acts and would include the offence of supplying food that fails to comply with food safety requirements. The existing provisions relating to unfit food are unsatisfactory and the changes proposed by the Bill—removing the necessity to prove that food was intended to be sold for human consumption—are welcome.

The new power to detain suspect food for investigation, where one or more items in a batch has been proved to be unfit, is necessary, as is the introduction of rules that provide that, if one part of a batch fails to meet the requirements, the whole batch will be assumed not to meet the requirements. I am particularly concerned about that, following incidents in my constituency about a year ago involving imported Irish beef. Environmental health officers had to write off, in effect, whole batches, because of the quantities of unfit meat that were coming in. The meat processors put them under intense pressure not to take that action, but simply to go through each batch in detail. The Bill will represent a major improvement in such cases.

The changed prosecution procedures will enable enforcement to be more effective, and I welcome the fact that penalties are to be increased to more realistic levels, bearing in mind the sort of profits that unscrupulous people and organisations are able to make.

The registration of premises, however, is an area where the Government are falling short of what should be done. The introduction of registration represents only a bureaucratic step. By itself, it will achieve nothing, whatever the public might think about the need for premises to be registered. I shall table amendments to require the licensing of all food premises.

An interesting debate took place recently in the Committee that was considering an EC document entitled "Health Food Rules, Products and Animal Origins." That document appeared to drive a cart and horses through the Government's arguments in refusing to take action on licensing. Indeed, the Minister accepted during that discussion that much uncertainty existed about how the references concerned with registration should be understood, because they seemed to involve prior notification, in effect, licensing. I would welcome such a step, although there was much else in that EC document with which I disagreed.

Registration has the benefit of letting a local authority know what is happening so that it can check that food is being prepared and sold in a satisfactory manner, but only after the premises are open and operating. It would be more sensible for such observations to be made, through licensing, in advance of premises opening. The local authority could then satisfy itself that the necessary health requirements would be met. That would enable unsuitable premises to be ruled out before they were opened. Licensing would also mean that premises that were continually proving to be a public health risk could lose their licences.

I worked for a time, after leaving school, in a restaurant. I am not aware of any problems that that establishment had in the preparation of food. It was probably much like any other restaurant—not perfect but not bad. Down the road was a so-called health food restaurant—purportedly selling the best of food—which regularly had enforcement action taken against it. It had appalling standards, but nothing much happened, apart from a continual process of minor offences receiving minor penalties. I am sure that, if the public had had any idea of what the trade was saying about that restaurant, or were aware of the action that the environmental health officers were regularly having to take, nobody would have eaten there. Without a licensing system, it was not possible properly to deal with that case.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

The Richmond committee, which reported recently on the microbiological safety of food, said:

"As we have made clear in our letters to Ministers, we believe a system of formal licensing involving prior inspection should in due course be extended to a wide range of food operations."

The Minister's reluctance to accept that does not accord with what the public expects. Ministers probably think that they can avoid taking such action because of the public belief that when we say we are introducing a system of registering food premises, that involves the licensing of premises. People think that before an operator can open for business, the establishment and its activities will be checked out. That is not the case.

I will not go in great detail into all the provisions of the Bill. I agree with the decision to widen the controls over contaminants and residues, and with the decision to allow Ministers to make emergency control orders. I am also glad to see some Crown exemptions being brought to an end. That will apply, for example, to prisons. I hope that it will apply equally to the House of Commons. I do not know whether any Duchy of Cornwall properties and tenancies are currently exempted. If they are, I hope that they, too, will no longer be exempted.

Although I welcome many of the Bill's provisions, can we be sure that they will be enforced? That brings us to the allocation of finance for enforcement, and the Minister spoke of £30 million being made available.

That sum is far from unwelcome but I am afraid that it is unlikely to be adequate. I agree that any debate on the subject is likely to be sterile: one side will say that it is adequate and the other will say that it is not and both sources of information—the Department and the local authorities—have vested interests. It is difficult to be sure about the adequacy or otherwise of the figure. But I am very concerned and I know that those who will have to enforce it are very concerned.

I ask Ministers to ensure that adequate funding is provided in advance so that the Bill can be properly enforced from the word go as there will inevitably be a set-up cost. Something that may be found necessary in the long term may be missed at first and that can discredit the provisions that have been made. I do not want to argue about whether £30 million is enough or whether a further £10 million should be added, but I hope that Ministers will respond to the important need to ensure that adequate money is properly allocated in good time.

As I said, the Bill falls seriously short of what is required, and I should like to draw the attention of the House to many of the matters omitted from the Bill that the public could reasonably have expected from a food Bill so loudly trumpeted by the Government in advance of its publication. There is nothing in the Bill to encourage organic or less intensive farming. There is nothing on pesticide residues in food, although opinion polls have highlighted the fact that that is a matter of enormous concern to the general public. There is no national food policy on nutrition and diet, despite the known links between poor food and illness.

I feel particularly strongly about the fact that there are no measures to speed up reviews of older pesticides, many of which have been banned elsewhere but are still legal here and whose clearance data are still shrouded in secrecy. There are no measures to improve hygiene in abattoirs —a subject of which I have become especially aware through my work with local environmental health officers who have expressed their concern about BSE and cross-contamination that can arise from procedures in abattoirs and food processing plants. There are no proposals to label foods treated with pesticides or to itemise their saturated fat and sugar content. There is nothing to deal with new products such as so-called "superglue meat"—the blood enzyme products that may be coming into our shops later this year.

The Minister says that labelling is a matter for manufacturers in the first instance and for environmental health officers if the manufacturers do not proceed with it. But there is an enormous gap between the theory and the reality. Many of the descriptions that are used are all very well for those who are well-informed but they rarely meet the ordinary consumers' need to understand readily what they are purchasing and to decide what they want to avoid. There is no provision to eliminate unnecessary additives.

Finally, there is no intention to deal with a matter that could properly be dealt with in such a Bill—the labelling of animal feedstuffs. Farmers all round the country have expressed strong concern about the lack of labelling, but the Bill specifically excludes animal feedstuffs as food products, so none of its clauses will be relevant to them.

As I said at the start, the major issue in the debate has inevitably been food irradiation. I welcome the considerable concern that is evident on both sides of the House, although there are varying views on the extent to which that concern needs to be articulated and what action needs to be taken. No doubt we shall have an interesting debate on the subject in Committee. I welcome what the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), the Labour Front-Bench spokesman, said today, but I think that he will agree that what was said by Labour in the other place was by no means as forceful, which I found disappointing.

In the Lords, Labour failed to support an amendment tabled by the Liberal Democrats to prevent the legalisation or irradiation until a diagnostic test had been established and an independent review had been carried out into the effects of irradiation on pesticide residues, vitamin content, food additives and food packaging. Speaking from the Labour Front Bench, Lord Gallagher said:

"My own view is that we can live with irradiation."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 January 1990; Vol. 514, c. 770.]

That is not my view and it is not the view advanced by the hon. Member for South Shields today. I hope that we shall agree in Committee.

Dr. David Clark: Perhaps it will help the hon. Gentleman if I give him a categorical assurance that the official Labour party line is that we oppose irradiation. We shall be fighting it tooth and nail and we shall welcome his support.

Mr. Taylor: I suspected that the Labour party's line would not be quite the same as that taken in the Lords, although I do not suggest that Labour entirely welcomed irradiation there. There was a difference of opinion and I am glad that we have been able to clear it up.

It is not only the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats who are opposed to irradiation. It is opposed by almost all retailers, by the environmental health officers, by the British Medical Association board of science, by the National Farmers Union, by the women's institutes and by all the major stores except Sainsbury's.

The Government argue that the World Health Organisation has cleared the process as safe but in the European documents the opposite view is adopted. The committee of experts had not considered the general safety aspects of the food irradiation process and it had not claimed that food irradiation was safe or that it had no harmful effects on human health.

That is what the European Parliament working document said. The Minister did not deny that; he merely argued that the WHO had backed the proposal. In Committee, the Minister will have to go into much more detail about what the WHO actually said. He will have to refer to the small print rather than giving us bland assurances. If it had been the other way round—if all the organisations to which I referred supported irradiation but the WHO opposed it—I doubt whether the Minister would have said, "We certainly cannot have it because, although there is so much support, the WHO has told us that we had better not introduce the proposal." The Minister has made a rather weak case in praying in aid the advice of that one organisation.

It is not merely a question whether we should allow food irradiation to go ahead. The words "food irradiation" do not appear in the Bill. I suspect that that is rather convenient. I suspect that Ministers were hoping that it would not be a subject for such lively debate here or in Committee. Worse still, clause 17 gives the Minister carte blanche to introduce any measures that he likes in respect of any new food process. The debate on food irradiation alone gives us ample reason not to accept the clause. We shall not have the opportunity to debate adequately other processes that may be developed even if they come under the public gaze to the same extent as food irradiation, because the Bill casts aside our powers to do that.

I regret that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did not stay beyond the first speech after his own. He was contemptuous and attacked those who oppose the process, including me, on the ground that we were denying choice to consumers. I have always been under the impression that when people say, "Choose your poison," they mean it figuratively and are not making a serious suggestion. I do not believe that the Minister would argue that line on any other process. It is just not the case that we allow people to choose their poison. We go to great lengths to ensure that products are safe before they go on sale and that we can check up on what manufacturers are doing.

The point made by several hon. Members that there is no way of finding out whether foods have been treated by irradiation is one of the major factors to which the Minister has so far failed to respond. He will have to come up with a much better explanation of how we can allow this to go through when there is no way of checking what procedures a particular food may have been subjected to under irradiation.

I would say also to those who argue that only good food can be irradiated that I am afraid they are wrong. Bad food should not be irradiated, but there is nothing to stop anyone doing it. One of the results of the irradiation process is to kill the bacteria that make it possible to tell that food has gone off. So irradiation can be used by the unscrupulous as a way of disguising bad food. Indeed, it is not uncommonly argued that that is precisely what happens at present: food that is produced in or shipped to this country is found to be going off, so is shipped to other countries for irradiation treatment and then brought back, when it is no longer possible to identify the problems that have occurred.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman able to define what he means when he talks about bad food? Surely, food that is not of a high quality and is irradiated does not become bad food; it is still edible, and, indeed, perfectly healthy to eat, but it will not taste very nice. Is not that the real point?

Mr. Taylor: No. The real point is that irradiation can be used to kill the bacteria in food that tell us that food is going off. Irradiation can be used on food that is already beginning to go off.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that food that has deteriorated to the point at which it can be described as bad and which smells and tastes bad does not suddenly become good-tasting or good-smelling as a result of irradiation? The bad taste and the bad smell persist.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Member is right, if the food is allowed to get to that point. I am arguing about what happens before that. There is common anecdotal evidence that this is already happening with food coming in from the continent that has been treated with irradiation precisely for this reason.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: One of the things about irradiation that disturbs me enormously is the idea that one can get rid of a food poisoning epidemic by using irradiation. Over half the cases of offal poisoning come from poultry and the idea is that poultry is irradiated to kill off the salmonella. This is a case, therefore, of making bad food good. Over half the poultry produced has salmonella, and it is a case of using two wrongs to make a right.

Mr. Taylor: My response to that is that I think that we will have an interesting debate in Committee. I certainly do not want to speak overlong now.

I refer finally to a subject that is not tackled in the Bill, but which I believe should be—that is, labelling and whether we are really making the public aware of the things of which they wish to be made aware. For example, if somebody goes to a shop and buys a product described as "strawberry flavour" and then buys another product described as "strawberry flavoured", he or she is buying two completely different things. One of them contains strawberries, although perhaps not many, and one does not.

I honestly do not believe that most people understand this. Looking at the way the products are dressed up to look wholesome and attractive and at their plastic packaging, it is clear that the food labelling laws that currently exist are not adequate. A similar thing could happen in future with blood enzyme meat products. I do not believe that the kind of labelling that has been mentioned would adequately tell customers what they are getting.

I argue that, for all those reasons, the Bill is imperfect —not because, with the one exception of irradiation, it by and large does things that it should not do, but because it simply does not do the things that it should. It is inadequate. There will not be a vote against it tonight, I suspect, because there is not much in it to vote against, but

[Mr. Taylor]

in Committee there will, I think, be long and hard debate in an attempt to put into the Bill the kind of teeth that it should have had from the start.

7.25 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): A nation can be judged in various ways, but it surely owes two vital duties to its citizens: first, to ensure that they are properly nourished; and, secondly, to safeguard them with adequate defences. The Bill is concerned with the first of those duties and is to be warmly welcomed. Good food hygiene is vital and if we are here giving legislative teeth to a framework which should last for many years, it is the Conservatives who have not flinched from ensuring better food standards.

The Bill revises the offences, modernises the statutory defences, imposes higher penalties for offenders, strengthens the powers of enforcement officers, introduces improvement notices and provides for the training of food handlers. It will give the Government greater control over contaminants and residues, as well as new technological advances.

Although the fermented grape may be only peripheral to the Bill, I declare a possible interest as a master of wine by examination.

Good food is intrinsically linked with good health and it must be a constant source of embarrassment to the Labour party to have let the British public down when in Government. Today we have more than 70,000 more nurses and 14,000 more doctors in our National Health Service and spending is set to rise by some £2,400 million in 1990-91, which means that NHS expenditure will have increased by more than 45 per cent. in real terms on Labour's last year, 1978-79.

Just as the Labour Government neglected health care, so they gave no attention to the important matter of food control. The Conservatives have accepted that challenge, and the Bill is the result. It is substantial, as it will replace the existing food legislation in England, Wales and Scotland with one statute to cover Great Britain.

The Bill provides, I believe, a good balance between the interests of the consumer and those of fair trade. Overall, public confidence in the food chain from the farm to the shop will be boosted. Already we are seeing good initiatives at the regional level. I draw attention to the Association of North Yorkshire Food and Drink Producers, which uses the slogan "The Yorkshire Pantry" and has already held two food hygiene forums which have brought together representatives from the independent and multiple retail sectors, the licensed catering trade and environmental health. The association is rightly concerned that legislation should be uniformly applied, with no loopholes for the unscrupulous trader.

Some members of the public have been destabilised by certain academics with very sketchy research. My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) was right to draw that to our attention. This is in stark contrast with proper research and communication based on solid documentation. It will be interesting to see how far the Opposition use that sketchy research from those quasi-academics in pursuing certain arguments. In this context, I commend the free food-line service provided by the food safety advisory centre, which has already received more than 8,000 calls.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us who the quasi-academics are, so that we have the information on the record. Their assertions can then be determined with certainty at later stages in the consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Gregory: Both sides of the House will expect arguments to be substantiated. The hon. Gentleman and I are both entitled to make claims. I am sure that he will produce evidence, including research sources, to support his claims. We shall then be able to judge them accordingly. I shall be happy to be part of that process.

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gregory: In this year alone——

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gregory: I have dealt adequately with the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I can see that the Opposition are embarrassed by their use in the past of certain quasi-academics. We shall see whether they still rely upon them.

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gregory: I wish to refer to the amount of food safety research that is undertaken.

Mr. Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When hon. Members wish to produce arguments for debate——

Mr. Raffan: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Davies: I am being barracked from a sedentary position, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I suggest that whether I am raising a point of order rests with you, not with Conservative Members.

If arguments are advanced in debate, and especially when hon. Members ask who has made the unsubstantiated claims and for evidence to be produced, is there not a clear responsibility for the hon. Member who has put them forward to produce his evidence?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Paul Dean): That is a matter for debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Gregory: After that unnecessary intervention from the hon. Gentleman, I will try to make some progress. Despite the sparsity of Opposition Members in the Chamber, many of my hon. Friends wish to contribute to the debate.

This year alone, the Government are spending £8·5 million on food safety research. There have been no cuts —indeed, extra cash has been provided. There has been an increase in provision of £500,000 on last year.

Right hon. and hon. Members have referred to irradiation. I do not wish to take up too much time on that, but irradiation is not a new form of food preservation which has arrived in the past few weeks or months—it was introduced about 80 years ago. I understand that it is permitted in 35 countries world-wide and in use in 21 of them, including four member states of the European Community and the United States of America.

The case for irradiation has not yet been well made out, as my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said at some length. We know that the process

reduces some vitamins in food, especially vitamins A and B, thiamin, pyridoxine and ascorbic acid. The changes caused by food irradiation, however, are extremely small.

It is important—this has always been recognised by Conservatives—that there should be choice in food. Accordingly, if irradiation will increase our choice, I am in favour of it. I accept that the present system for handling herbs and spices is not satisfactory, and that is one of the cases for irradiation.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take up a worry which has been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is felt that there should be a test to determine whether a food has been subject to irradiation, and that should be dealt with before we can consider legalising that food.

Any system of control relies ultimately on the vigilance of enforcement officers and on adequate penalties. Some local authorities have not given adequate priority to those important considerations. I am delighted that extra resources of £30 million annually are to be provided out of central finance. That should ensure that extra enforcement officers can be employed.

In November, the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, on whom enforcement of the Bill largely falls, reported 418 vacancies in England, Wales and Ulster. That fact was pointed out by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). The figure means that, nationally, one in eight posts were unfilled. The major reason for the manpower shortage lies with education—there are not enough training places at our polytechnics.

I understand that there are two methods of becoming a qualified environmental health officer. The first involves taking a degree in environmental health, which is a four-year course. The first two years are spent at a polytechnic, followed by one year with a local authority and a final year at a polytechnic. The other method involves a diploma in environmental health undertaken through a local authority by day release and/or block release. Too few individuals are able to undertake such a course due to lack of sponsorship by local authorities.

In York, for example, the nearest course was at Hull. That course is no longer available. Accordingly, a good and experienced chief environmental health officer, such as I have in York in the form of Trevor Phillips, is thus unable to sponsor young people because of the distances involved. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to hold urgent discussions with the polytechnics so that the number of posts can be increased. We must ensure that central Government funds are channelled in the right direction.

Anyone who reads the Bill will be aware of the importance of registration or licensing. The Bill provides for the registration of food premises and for such premises to be closed down immediately if public health is at risk. That is a balanced approach and the right way forward. One can imagine the power which could otherwise be given to a local authority to licence willy-nilly. Such power could easily be abused. A local authority could arbitrarily dictate how many Chinese restaurants or Indian takeaways should be allowed to trade instead of allowing the public to decide.

Licensing in such circumstances could easily be misapplied. If we had had such a system in the past in York, only one confectionery company might have been considered adequate. I am pleased to say that, in the 18th and 19th centuries, there was no such red tape. Had such a system existed, it would have stopped the development of Craven, Rowntree and Terry. I am glad to know that similar initiatives in future will not be stifled in their infancy.

The EHO must be informed that a food-related business is to start operating. He can then visit the premises and judge the level of risk. It is clear that a major supermarket selling preserved foods needs fewer visits than a street trader. Products such as ice cream and milk deserve special attention.

Good food handlers employ and train staff to understand hygienic practices. I hope that local colleges will develop and extend their courses to cater for that need, if they are not doing so already. In some authorities, the EHO runs a food hygiene course. Three such courses are run by the Yorkshire EHO.

Better food hygiene should mean the separation of cooked and uncooked meats and the assurance that coins are not handled by the same unprotected hands which served the food. I believe that a person prosecuted for that practice should be disqualified for two years from operating the premises and that the technical move of having the business transferred to the spouse's name should be prevented. That is a problem in areas such as west Yorkshire where, with a large Indian ethnic community, the male is dominant in catering and other businesses. If he is found guilty of an offence and the business is transferred to the name of his spouse, that does not mean that she has the time and management skills to run it properly—it just means that there is a different name on the business notepaper.

If an EHO is worried about food control, he needs the power to act quickly. By virtue of clause 12, the Bill provides for emergency prohibition where there is an imminent risk to health, and clause 13 provides powers to make emergency control orders.

I believe in the carrot rather than the stick. Food retailers who are noted for care will attract good custom. The stick is the penalty of fines of up to £20,000 plus six months' imprisonment on conviction in a magistrates court, or unlimited fines or two years' imprisonment following conviction on indictment. There will be a tenfold increase in the present fine for selling unsafe food.

It is right that we consider the legal concept of due diligence, which will be extended to anyone selling food. This means that shops, supermarkets and restaurants will have to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that the food that they are providing is safe. The Bill will not allow them to escape prosecution merely by blaming their suppliers. We should realise that the new powers will substantially increase the burden on retailers, but it is essential that the definition of due diligence in clause 22 should remain unaltered.

I am concerned that there is no mechanism for public complaints. It is important that in any prosecution there is early disclosure of evidence. I recently heard of a peice of glass being found in a packet of soup. The prosecuting authority would not reveal that evidence to the company concerned. It was only when the company guaranteed to pay for an independent analysis that it became clear that the glass could not have originated in the company but came from the bowl in which the soup had been cooked.

I am also concerned that there is no appeal against condemnation by a justice of the peace. That was considered in the other place and the Minister suggested

[Mr. Gregory]

that judicial review was the answer. I hope that that will not be the answer when we consider this subsequently, because it is inadequate.

I welcome the Bill. It is tough. I urge the Opposition not to unpick it, because it strikes the right balance between the worlds of commerce and of the consumer.

7.40 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I share the view expressed already by many hon. Members that there are huge gaps in the Bill. I noticed with interest that the Minister talked about the whole food chain, but the Bill does not cover that, as has been pointed out. That would not matter so much if the food chain was being dealt with adequately in other ways, but that is not so. There is more to food safety than food poisoning, such as salmonella, important though that is. Food safety is a much wider issue.

For example, many parents changed to giving their children apple juice rather than the sugar or sweetener laden squashes. Then, to their horror, they learned about alar, the growth retardant chemical which interfered grossly with the growth of apples. It went right into the cells and could not be washed off. The healthy juice that they thought that they were giving their children was open to doubt. They got no protection from the Government on that matter, even though that substance was banned as carcinogenic in the United States and even though the manufacturers themselves have ceased to manufacture it. The Government have simply gone on saying, "Don't worry; it's safe." That kind of thing does more to alarm people who are interested in their food than many other utterances. Such experiences bring the wholesomeness of our food into question.

When the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was challenged on television about a vet's comments that cows infected with mad cow disease but undiagnosed as such could be getting into the slaughterhouses and into the food chain, his comment was, "So what?" Then he said, "Oh well, we rip out all the central nervous system." An environmental health officer then pointed out that it is impossible to guarantee that all the dangerous organs would be ripped out of an animal in that way. But all we got from the Minister was, "So what?" Many people watching him on television would have had their confidence in his Department, if they had any, gravely shaken.

There have been some attempts in the other place to improve the Bill. There was an attempt to amend the Bill, requiring food that had been subject to spraying to be labelled. Food may be sprayed as many as 40 times, but that amendment got short shrift. There was an attempt to ensure that alcoholic drinks should not be exempt from proper labelling, but the Government spokeswoman said that such detail was inappropriate in the Bill. The alcoholic drinks industry is large and not many people would regard it as a detail.

A noble Lord tried to introduce an amendment about mechanically recovered meat, so that food being presented as containing meat when it really contained mechanically recovered meat would be labelled as such. Again, the Government spokeswoman said that once again she believed that that kind of detail was inappropriate to the Bill. When further pressed on both those matters, she hid behind EEC regulations. That is grossly inadequate.

I am worried about the inadequacies of the Bill, but I am even more worried about funding. The figure of £30 million has been put forward and the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) referred to £30 million being dedicated to dealing with the matter. It is one thing to say, as the explanatory and financial memorandum does,:

> "The additional cost for local authorities is likely to be of the order of £30 million a year from 1991-1992 onwards. This will be taken into account in next year's Revenue Support Grant Settlement".

but that is far from a guarantee of real money. If that sum is taken into account and at the same time there is an underestimate of inflation, such as we have seen this year, and local authorities are underfunded to the tune of £3 billion, £30 million will not go far among local authorities to fund this or any other of their functions.

Lancashire county council has been deprived of £168 million. If we add to that the amount of which district councils have been deprived, simply by sharp practice in reckoning—underestimating for inflation—neither my constituents nor the people who will be responsible for reinforcement will be impressed by being told that £30 million is being taken into account. It might mean that they lose a few thousand pounds less next year, but not that real extra money is granted to them. Unfortunately, it is real extra money that will be required to pay the salaries of the extra environmental health officers who will be required.

The funding arrangements are grossly inadequate. I do not understand why there cannot be some earmarking. I do not understand why local authorities cannot be guaranteed a real and identifiable extra sum in order to meet the responsibilities that are now being placed on them. I fear that we shall be treated to a great deal of fiction in this matter which will not help local authorities to enforce the new legislation.

I said that there is a great deal more to food safety than food poisoning, such as salmonella or listeria, and that is true, Nevertheless, those are important matters. The most important contribution that can be made for the prevention, for example, listeria, is proper temperature control of food by retailers and in the home and the Select Committee on Social Services made some recommendations on that. They were straightforward recommendations—nothing elaborate, such as food irradiation. They were recommendations about which there could be no controversy about their safety. For instance, it was recommended that retailers should have integral and visible thermometers in refrigerators containing cook-chill food. We made that recommendation last June. Surely one would have thought that the Government would simply have said that that was a good recommendation. But they did not.

We had a contorted bit of evidence when we subsequently interviewed the principal in the health service division of the Department of Health. We asked whether the new food and hygiene regulations would require retailers to have refrigeration equipment fitted with thermometers. He told us:

> "to comply with the regulations clearly a thermometer will be required . . . There may not in fact, in the regulations be a requirement to actually provide a thermometer, but the mere fact that to comply with the regulations they need a thermometer is sufficient in legal terms for it to be provided."

Hon. Members will not be surprised that the Select Committee's response to that was that, although it might be sufficient in legal terms, it would produce total confusion among producers, retailers and consumers.

If the Government want temperature control in cabinets, they should make a requirement that there should be integral and visible thermometers. It would be fairer to retailers and consumers, and to shop workers, who could then monitor properly the foods under their care as they might well be blamed for any bad handling. Yet the Government will not simply say, "Yes. Let's do it."

There has been similar equivocation on other recommendations. That alone is sufficient to justify our great scepticism that the Government, who are so keen to introduce irradiation, are simply doing that because they are keen on safe food. Otherwise, good hygiene would be at the top of the list of their requirements.

Many hon. Members have made good points about the subject of irradiated food and I do not intend to repeat them. However, the chief medical officer mentioned an important matter to the Select Committee last June. He told us that he believed that food irradiation should be given further consideration, but he pointed out that various safeguards would need to be developed to ensure that it was not abused. He said:

"it is necessary for us to develop detection procedures so that it is not possible for a person producing food to irradiate food twice—to do it once, render it sterile and then when it gets to the expiry date to do it again."

The chief medical officer said that last June, but no tests are yet available which can identify food which has been irradiated once, let alone twice. To those Conservative Members who think that there is virtually no difference in the food after it has been irradiated, all I can say is that their idea of a scientific approach is sadly misplaced. The fact that it is not possible to have reliable, cheap and available tests—for example, chemical tests—to identify irradiated food does not mean that the food has the same biological nature as it had before it was irradiated. We know that irradiation causes changes in the food, but we do not fully know the significance of those changes for human health.

The Minister said in his speech that it will be safer to allow irradiation because, as long as we do not allow it, irradiated food will be, as he put it, sneaked in. What confidence can we have in the food manufacturing and importing trades if that is the kind of thing they will get up to, if they will break the law by sneaking in irradiated food when it is clearly banned? It is precisely those manufacturers and importers—whom the Secretary of State invites us to distrust so much at present—whose willingness and ability to label with total accuracy we would have to rely on. I could have no confidence in that.

We have heard about the broad alliance of people who are opposing food irradiation. It includes most of the big retailing chains—all but one, I think. It includes those who earn their living from marketing fresh produce and foods, and I do not believe that it is accidental that they are so hostile to irradiation. They recognise that there is likely to be a consumer boycott of their products if irradiation is given the go-ahead and if people lose confidence. We have all seen on television the signs on doors of shops in the United States saying, "No irradiated foods here". That is because they know that they have to retain people's confidence if they want to keep their custom.

Conservative Members have used a childish argument to challenge the notion that bad food cannot be made to seem safe. They have said that bad food tastes and smells bad. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that, but he is not in the Chamber at present. Perhaps if the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) had used the term "dangerous food" rather than "bad food", it would have been more clearly understood. Food can be extremely dangerous and taste quite normal. If that was not the case, we would not have any food poisoning because people would take one bite and put their knives and forks away. We do not know whether food is germ laden until we get diarrhoea, or whatever.

Food could be laden with organisms and then apparently made sterile by irradiation, but that does not remove the poisons and the toxins that the organisms have generated within the food, and it does not prevent it from becoming reinfected. It is a con to persuade people to part with hard-earned money to make profits for unscrupulous traders.

I am pleased that traders and supermarket chains in this country are showing resistance to irradiation. They are showing more confidence in their own products than the Government are, and that is the one thing in this whole saga which gives me any hope whatsoever.

Therefore, although the Bill takes some steps and fills in some of the gaps, it is hopelessly inadequate and leaves people undefended against the huge changes in technology which have taken place in agriculture and food processing, and which are making our food less wholesome than it was, and reducing its quality.

If the Government really want people to feel confident that food is wholesome, they will bring forward not only this Bill, but another one which will take in the whole food chain and which will deal with the deplorable way in which animals are raised and our land is treated. If the Government start there, they may produce a Bill which protects food quality. If the Bill deals with all the other things that we have pointed out, it may deal with food safety adequately.

Whereas we mostly get legislation which is uniformly horrific from the Government, the best thing about this Bill is that it takes some small steps in the right direction. That is very faint praise indeed, and it is intended as such.

7.58 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I speak as the chairman of the all-party food and health forum, which has conducted a dialogue with many interested parties in the food industry about food and health, diet and nutrition, and which has recognised public concern following recent outbreaks of food poisoning.

This is a good time for us to examine the broader context of the events that have led to the introduction of the Bill. I welcome it: I think that it takes some important steps, and I do not share the dismal forebodings of some Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise). The "due diligence" defence in clause 22 and the general safety requirement in clause 8 between them will, I believe, make for a balanced approach that will ensure consumer safety.

I also welcome the statement by my right hon. Friend the Minister that he intends to widen the role of consumers in consultations on food safety matters. I have wondered for a long time why there is no place for a consumer representative on Government committees such as the committee on toxicity and the advisory committee on

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

novel foods and processes. I wonder, also, why so many of those committees require the imposition of the Official Secrets Act on their members to ensure their smooth operation. I hope that my right hon. Friend's statement signals his recognition that consumers and their organisations can play a major role.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend say that resources would be made available to enforce the greater rigour that is implicit in the Bill. I was interested, however, by the complaints of Opposition Members that £30 million was too little, and that the money was not earmarked for what they considered the most suitable purposes. I hope that, when he replies, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health will explain whether the reference in clause 6 to Ministers' right to take over the responsibility of enforcement from local authorities extends to those authorities that are clearly falling down in their duties.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), who has left the Chamber, spoke of the importance of speedy action to provide the necessary extra resources and the environmental health officers to ensure that the new, more rigorous framework is effective. There is a risk that the shortfall will not be tackled in time, and I urge my hon. Friend to take account of that and act promptly. We need the resources to cope with both registration and inspection of new food premises. Although I do not go as far as some Opposition Members who have suggested that licensing would be preferable to registration, I believe that a registration system must be backed up with sufficient resources for the immediate inspection of new premises. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to convince the House—and, in due course, the Committee—that he recognises the validity of that suggestion.

One of the key provisions is in schedule 1, which deals with training. We might accept that, however much we legislate, we shall always be bedevilled by human error. None of us is perfect; we all slip up from time to time. We can overcome the worst effects of that, however, by ensuring that good training is given to those whose work involves any part of the food chain.

Food safety requires not just the training of others, but self-regulation and self-discipline. We cannot legislate for what happens in the homes of our fellow citizens, but we can exhort them to read the advisory material that is widely available, and to recognise that they are at the end of the food chain—the point of consumption. They are just as capable—some would say more so—of adulterating food in the process of cooking and serving as is anyone involved with an earlier link on the chain.

Clear labelling of food, with which clause 17 is concerned, is crucial, not only in connection with irradiation but because it promotes healthy eating. I warmly welcome the progress now being made towards European harmonisation: the EC agreement of 22 December 1989, to which my right hon. Friend referred, was an important step forward. The Government must now act quickly to ensure that we are in the vanguard of the introduction of clear product labelling. Too many of us eat and drink our way to premature death or crippling disease; we owe it to our fellow citizens to give them every opportunity and encouragement to avoid such a fate.

The Bill, and the regulations that will depend on it, must make allowance for novel foods. The other place added to the definition of food in clause 1

"articles and substances of no nutritional value".

What is the Government's attitude to substances such as Olestra, which have no nutritional value but which have dietary value in reducing the ingestion of other unhealthy ingredients? Food technology is moving on all the time, and we must be able to respond to its challenges quickly.

Obviously, it is impossible for us to avoid referring to food irradiation. Here I must declare not a personal but a constituency interest, in that my constituency contains one of the foremost companies involved in the irradiation of products for which the process is now legal—Isotron. I do not speak on its behalf, however; my point is that the case for food irradiation has been made extremely well by organisations throughout the world.

I have had an early opportunity to read a leaflet that is shortly to be published by the Food Safety Advisory Centre, which states:

"The weight of scientific opinion considers food irradiation to be a safe process, and another useful tool for protecting our food. It is not a panacea, and will not eradicate all bacteria by itself. Food irradiation is to be seen as a partner with good manufacturing practice, good hygiene, packaging and temperature control.

Irradiation has been studied since 1905, and no other food processing method has been subject to such close examination for so many years. Whilst some individual scientists may have reservations, the weight of scientific opinion agree this to be a safe process.

Food irradiation has been accepted by the World Health Organisation since 1961, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, and International Atomic Energy Agency who evaluated the process and their Joint Expert Committee on Food Irradiation declared that the use of food irradiation up to a specific dose of 10kGy is a safe process (when applied at recommended doses). In the United Kingdom the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods reported in 1986 that food irradiation is a safe process, presenting no toxicological hazard and introducing no special nutritional or microbiological problem."

I could not have put it better myself.

I hope that we shall not reach the point in this and subsequent debates where we say to those who are hostile to food irradiation that we shall allow irradiated food to be labelled because that will give people the chance to avoid eating such food. I hope that the Government will say that there is a case for food irradiation, that irradiated food is safe to eat and that people who wish to eat safe food should seek out those foods that are labelled as having been irradiated and enjoy eating them.

I hope that, as the months and years go by, the general public will overcome their understandable nervousness in the face of so much hostile propaganda from the Opposition and others. I hope that in due course we shall take the same relaxed view about food irradiation as we now take about the motor car. Is not it significant that the Labour party's emblem is the same red flag as was paraded in years gone by in front of every motor car? We have moved on from those days. I believe that in a few years' time, we shall have moved on from this unnecessary concern about food irradiation.

We have to work within the European context on food safety, but the United Kingdom can and ought to lead the way by responding to the problems and embracing new technologies. The Bill will help that process. I wish it well.

8.12 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I was looking forward to a factual and enlightening debate. Then the Minister spoke. I was amazed to hear him say that pasteurised milk is so safe that we do not need to say on the milk top that the milk is pasteurised. That is not true. If a housewife picks up a bottle of milk and looks at the top, she sees, "Pasteurised." A cream carton also says that the cream inside is pasteurised. That shows the amount of ignorance on the Conservative Benches. It worries me.

I welcome the Bill. It is much delayed; it ought to have been introduced six years ago. I am sure we shall debate that matter in Committee. The Bill is greatly flawed and I should like to deal in detail with why that is so, but that would upset hon. Members because we are short of time.

The Bill is needed because food-borne illness has quadrupled during the last 10 years. I refer to food-borne illness rather than to food poisoning. Government statistics also do not cover those who are poisoned by eating food. They cover salmonella and a few other small infections that cause food poisoning. They do not cover campylobacter, which causes 40,000 cases a year, and was discovered only in 1976 to be a food poisoning organism. However, the Government do not class such cases as food poisoning. The statistics also do not cover listeria, so I hope that the Government will change their compilation of the statistics and include food-borne diseases.

When all the figures are put together, there were 80,000 reported cases of people being made ill last year by eating food. If for every reported case, 10 go undetected, that means that there must be at least 800,000 cases of food poisoning a year. That is serious. I accept that the deaths that occur as a result of food poisoning are reported. Fortunately, there are only between 100 and 200 such deaths each year, but that is too many. Some of those deaths are due to the Government not having taken any action before now.

As for campylobacter, the Richmond report and the letter sent to the Minister in response to the then proposal to ban the sale of raw milk—or what is called green top milk—stated in no uncertain terms that 80 per cent. of campylobacter outbreaks are caused by raw milk, although only 3 per cent. of all milk is classed as raw milk. The report also says that, during the last 10 years, 13 people have died as a result of drinking green top milk.

Have the Government banned the sale of green top milk? No, they have promoted it. In September of this year, there will be new labelling. The industry will be placing a health warning on cartons or bottles of raw milk. They will carry the warning, "This milk can be dangerous." I know of only one other example of a health warning—that on packets of cigarettes. The only difference between cigarettes and green top milk is that cigarettes cannot be bought by children. However, the Government will allow milk that is potentially dangerous, especially to children, to be sold on the open market.

In March last year the Government said that they would ban the sale of raw milk, but they have changed their mind as a result of pressure from the farming community. The Government capitulated. That is a disgrace.

The Bill will provide the Minister with many powers. If the Minister is prepared to allow the sale of raw milk, how can we trust him to look after the nation's health and food safety?

There has been a major Government cover-up over contamination by listeria. We are also discussing in the debate the sixth report of the Social Services Committee "Food Poisoning: Listeria and Listeriosis." According to the chief medical officer of health's written evidence, outbreaks of listeriosis have killed people in Boston, Los Angeles, Switzerland and France. Nowhere in that evidence does he mention that there was an outbreak in this country in 1981. Only when he was pressed in Committee by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) did he say that there was probably an outbreak in Cumbria.

There was an outbreak in my constituency in 1981. Eleven people suffered from listeriosis and there were six deaths, which included four infants and two adults. The Government have never published that information, because they took no action on it. There has been action on listeriosis only during the last three years. However, the Government knew in 1981 that there was a problem.

Statistical evidence proved that people had been infected by pasteurised cream sold by a leading store. The cream had come not from a local farm but from a national supplier. Although the blame cannot be put on the store or the local suppliers, the fact is that six people died in that outbreak. The Government did nothing about it; they did not even publish their findings. Page 134 of the Richmond report referred very casually to

"a cluster of eleven cases in Cumbria in 1981 suggested the possibility that they may have been associated with cream."

Nowhere do the Government say that there were any deaths. Only now is the truth emerging.

I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State for Health is replying to the debate. Perhaps he will tell us, first, why that information was never supplied; secondly, what action the Government took to investigate the problem; and, thirdly, why under this Bill the same cloak of secrecy will stop the relevant authorities making such information available to the public. It is important that the public know about the problems involving food poisoning. The reason we know about cases in Switzerland, America and France is that their Governments tell us. Our Government hide everything behind a cloak of secrecy. I hope that the Bill will be amended to make sure that that is not the case in future.

I worry about the Bill and the people who will administer it. The Bill is necessary, but it will be in safe hands only when we have a Labour Minister to administer it.

8.20 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I wish to declare a financial interest in the food industry and, like all responsible people employed in the food industry, I have a big vested interest in food safety. The fact that there are so many people in the food industry with a vested interest in food safety is one of the greatest guarantees that the public have of the protection of their health and the food that they eat. It is a simple commercial fact that, if we poison our customers, we lose our businesses, so we have an enormous incentive to ensure that the food industry is safe and produces wholesome food.

I venture to suggest that we in Britain are lucky to be able to discuss food safety. There are millions of people in the world who would prefer to discuss the question of their next meal. It is a great luxury that we can spend time

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

talking about the quality, the standard and the wholesomeness of our food because of the abundance of food we enjoy, and let us thank God for that.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on introducing a sensible and workmanlike measure. To my mind, there is nothing in the Bill to which any responsible person working in any area of food handling could possibly take exception.

Hon. Members have suggested reasons why the Food Safety Bill has been brought forward now. The low level of knowledge and understanding which exists among many sections of the British public has already been mentioned. I shall elaborate by saying that that low level of knowledge and understanding extends through the storage and handling of food to the preparation and cooking of food. If anything, it is the result of our modern living patterns. The housewife today is looking for something convenient and instant in which she does not have to get too involved. Lest I be accused by the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) of being sexist, the same applies to men involved in the culinary arts.

My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the standards operated by local authorities. In commercial terms, that means that a company operating under the jurisdiction of a local authority which enforces standards rigorously is put to more expense and is thus at a competitive disadvantage compared with others in areas where the local authorities take a more relaxed view and do not enforce standards as they should. My right hon. Friend pointed out the need for greater similarity between the actions and mechanisms of local authorities. I am sure that that is right and I am convinced that if uniform standards are enforced across the entire country, the long-term effect will be to ratchet up standards in all aspects of food production, retailing and consumption.

Today's debate has centred to a greater or lesser extent on the dichotomy between those of us who would prefer the registration of food premises and those who would go further and require the licensing of all food premises. Hon. Members will not be surprised that I favour registration as the correct measure to take. It is no longer sufficient or adequate that we do not necessarily know who is involved in food handling and where they are. The register will provide that essential information so that in future we shall know who is handling our food and where they are.

That is not the same as licensing, nor is it intended to be. Our philosophy is to treat people as responsible individuals. We recognise that the majority of people, given that responsibility, will behave in a responsible fashion. I realise that there will be rogues in the food industry, as there are in all walks of life, but one of the essential features of the Bill is that it spells out a tariff of penalties for non-compliance. I do not think that anyone in the House today will argue that that tariff should not be rigorously enforced.

The food industry is perfor highly labour-intensive. It is a people industry. We cannot expect to achieve 100 per cent. satisfaction by standing over everyone involved in the food process to see that they do the job correctly. We depend on individual responsibility. There are many welcome examples of the entire food industry trying harder to police itself. There are several successful self-regulation schemes where industries are deciding in advance of Government legislation to take the bull by the horns and to set standards acceptable to the general public and to the Government.

The food industry and other industries have seen the introduction of the individual operative as the quality controller. Industry in general is moving away from the era when another person stood over the operative to make sure that the job was done properly. Now the operative is his own quality controller. That is most commendable and certainly in tune with the philosophy of the Government who want to inculcate individual responsibility.

The mention of training in the Bill is very welcome. I foresee enormous problems for the food industry. I mention just one or two concerns. People working in certain sectors of the food industry tend to be peripatetic and there is a high turnover of staff. That may have something to do with the low pay which is traditional in that industry. That could present difficulties in making people available for training, but I am optimistic enough to believe that the Bill will go a long way to improve matters in the very important area of training.

I want to say a word or two about inspection. It is impossible to believe that we shall ever get 100 per cent. supervision, 100 per cent. inspection, or 100 per cent. food safety. In my opinion, the inspectors, rather than congregating in offices attempting to license premises, must be out in the field inspecting. As a result of the register which will be available to them, they will be able to identify high-risk establishments. They must concentrate their efforts there, and use all the powers and resources available to them to raise standards. In that context, we must not forget the hazards ever present and ever prevalent in catering and domestic kitchens: I believe that the good Lord provides the food and the devil sends the cooks. We must ensure, so far as possible, that inspection homes in on problems of that sort.

As practically every hon. Member who has spoken has referred to irradiation, I shall deal with it only briefly. In any case, I have already made two speeches in this Chamber in favour of irradiation. The reason for the subject being raised so often here currently is that it is such an emotive issue. There are genuine and recognisable fears, born of a lack of knowledge. I, for one, am prepared to put my faith in the scientific knowledge that is available and to follow the Government down this road. All food preservation depends on arresting the rate of spoilage, whether by curing or salting, which goes back centuries, by canning, by freezing, by dehydrating or, nowadays, by irradiation. It is not a matter of making bad food good —it is a matter of arresting the rate of spoilage. One cannot reverse the process of putrefaction.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), whom I invariably mention in debates of this kind, talked about consumerism. I was going to congratulate him on having been converted to consumerism, until he made his pronouncement on irradiation, saying that he and his party would fight tooth and nail against it. By doing that, they will deny the consumer the choice in which I and my party most passionately believe.

8.31 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): This legislation is long overdue. It has been in gestation for six years, which is considerably longer than the gestation period of an elephant. During that time, we have seen a

huge increase in food-borne illness. We have heard about salmonella, but there are also campylobacter, listeria, rotavirus and clostridium, the incidence of all of which has increased, especially in the last three or four years. So the Bill is too late, and it could also be said that it is too little. The enforcement provisions are much improved. The higher penalties and strengthened powers for enforcement officers are a great improvement. But will there be officers to use those powers? Will the £30 million that has been promised materialise, and will it be enough? I doubt it.

I have grave doubts that the mere registration of food outlets will be sufficient. Could it be that this approach has been chosen because if licensing prior to opening were used there would not be sufficient environmental health officers to cope with licensing? And would registration merely serve to mask the continuation of the existing inadequate provision? I suspect so.

If the Bill is not amended, there will be an order-making power to license certain food businesses—for example, dairies and irradiation businesses. The Minister said of such irradiation—I quote as closely as possible—"Radiation causes so little change that it is undetectable, but it is considered dangerous because of those changes." If I heard the Minister aright, either he has no knowledge of the subject or he is misleading the House. He should know that the changes caused by irradiation are sometimes extremely detectable in certain foods by organoleptic methods—"organoleptic" being a big word for "by taste and smell".

For example, eggs are rendered totally inedible by irradiation. The fact that other foods do not taste bad after irradiation does not mean that radiolytic products are not present and are not potentially harmful. As the Minister should know, pasteurisation is quite different. That process is testable because the numbers and types of organisms left by it are detectable. In addition, in the case of milk there are simple tests—for example, the phosphatase test.

There are other possible dangers. We do not know what effects radiation has on food additives, contaminants, pesticides or packaging materials. With all these question marks over the process, we might ask who needs it. There is no discernible consumer demand. I do not believe that that is due to ignorance. In fact, those consumers who know more about the process are the ones who are more inclined to reject it.

We must therefore deduce that it is the producers who require it. But why? It is not a cure-all for food-borne illness. Most outbreaks of food poisoning have been related to eggs, paté and soft cheese, none of which can be irradiated, for the very good reason that I mentioned earlier—because they taste dreadful after irradiation. Botulism is resistant to radiation because it is a spore-bearing organism. But in the case of those organisms and foods for which irradiation can be used, often not all the organisms are killed. Quite a number of organisms are left and are able to compete in a freer atmosphere, not in competition with the less damaging organisms that are already there. Of course, toxins also survive irradiation.

It cannot be sensible to introduce a process with so many potential dangers, and with the added danger that it would be treated by producers as a cleaning-up operation at the end of a dirty operation. I hope that this is not the real reason for introducing the irradiation of food, but I suspect that it is.

Clause 26 provides for sampling from businesses. But how useful this can be if there is no test for irradiation, and how on earth the labelling of irradiated food can be enforced in cafes and restaurants if there is no test escapes me.

Lastly, why is there no general-duty requirement in the Bill? Other recent consumer protection legislation has had this standard provision, and the draft European Commission product directive imposes a much wider safety duty that takes account of the

"intended use, consumption, packaging, transport and storage of a product according to normal circumstances."

Surely we ought to have some such clause to take into account unforeseen problems and to give legal force to what must be seen as a real duty to society of anyone who provides one of the necessities of life, be it from a market stall or from a huge food factory.

8.37 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The Bill is widely welcomed by the food and drink industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) said, it speaks volumes for the way in which that industry approaches food safety. By and large, those involved in it are a most responsible body of people. In saying so, I emphasise "large" rather than "by".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow said, the debate has centred on the question of registration as against licensing. It may come as no surprise to hon. Members that I am in favour of registration. However, I believe that there should be more information on the register, including information about how each registered person proposes to handle the food. There should be a requirement to amend the registration when proposals are changed. This would be of enormous help to the environmental health officers, who would then know which retailers or carriers he should home in on as the ones employing fundamentally unsafe practices and the ones that, therefore, should be watched very closely.

I hope that the Bill is part of a series of measures related to consumer protection. It is essentially a consumer protection Bill. We in this country have tended to congratulate ourselves on the way in which we handle food. As so often, we have taken the view that we are the best in the world. I think that we have been among the worst in the western world. We allow cash to be handled with food. Display counters are not cold enough. We often see flies and other insects on displays. There are no hygiene tests on those serving in food shops.

We should contrast conditions here with those on the continent. We tend to look down on the continent, but standards there are far higher, and have been for a long time. In Italy, a person cannot sell food unless he has a regular health check. Someone who handles food has to go to hospital for a health check every three months. If someone is caught handling cash with food, he is immediately subject to a large, on-the-spot fine. A person cannot handle food unless wearing proper protective clothing, including a hat and a proper jacket; the clothing is supposed to be clean and of a given standard. There is an immediate fine of £250, £300, £400, or £500 if someone who is not properly dressed tries to sell food.

I have a lot of contact with Italy because my sister-in-law runs a shop there that sells food. I know about the standards and the regular tests that apply. When I have been there and have asked, "Can I help you?", my

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sister-in-law has said, "No, you have to stay on the other side of the counter." I have not been allowed to go behind the counter because I have not passed the medical tests and I have not had proper clothing.

The Bill is good, but it is cautious. I am sorry that it does not include tests such as I have mentioned, because we will have to have them in due course. They are common sense. People who come here from abroad are horrified at standards in our food shops.

The other day I went into a baker's shop to buy some bread. The woman said, "Hello, love." She produced the bread, took my money, put it in the till, and wrapped up the bread. Everything was mixed up. I was horrified to think what I was getting. In addition, the bread was sticking out of the paper. We have all had experiences like that. We have to change our practices if we want healthy food. I can only welcome the Bill as at least going down that road.

The Bill also covers labelling. We have a right to know what we are eating, how the food is prepared and what it contains. Misleading advertisements which are so beloved by some sections of the food industry must stop. The labelling must tell us if the food is 90 per cent. water and 1 per cent. flavouring. We must know what we are buying.

We have to be careful about labelling. I am deeply concerned about people who cannot take certain substances and who must know what is in the food. We cannot have labels that are covered simply in E numbers. We must know exactly what is in the food or the labelling will be misleading to all but the most expert consumer. We want something that covers the middle ground. The regulations must be strong and enforceable.

This is a consumer protection Bill. I am sorry that it does not cover weights and measures. I look forward to the next measure. When I went into the bread shop the other day and got my dirty bread, I was conscious of the fact that I was being ripped off. When wheat prices have been shooting down, bread prices have been shooting up. I cannot understand why consumers buy bread which is not weighed. We can buy a half a pound loaf for which we pay 40p, yet a baguette costs £1·50 a lb. It is time that everything was sold by weight so that the consumer is no longer ripped off, as happens from time to time.

The debate on irradiation has been interesting. Interventions from the Opposition Benches show that irradiation is not fully understood. I suspect that we will have an interesting and exciting time in Committee as we debate irradiation. I am in favour of it. The scientific evidence that I have read is overwhelming; I think that all the safeguards are available. I accept that there is concern about it. I look forward to the day when I can buy irradiated tropical fruit which was ripe before it was picked. When it has been picked green it is tasteless. I should like tropical fruit to be irradiated so that it comes to me with all the taste and flavour that I remember from my youth.

I cannot understand why the Opposition parties have taken a political stance on irradiation. I do not think that it is a party political matter. I look forward to the debate in Committee on irradiation.

8.45 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): A few years ago, I was shocked to discover that three nations in the United Kingdom were in the top five for heart disease. I was doubly shocked because the Government were complacent about it. In June 1985 I presented a petition to the House on the subject. Since then there have been numerous food scares involving salmonella, listeria, and botulism. My petition is still a model approach to safer food and a healthier diet.

I welcome the few morsels in the Bill, as do various consumer organisations and local authority enforcement officers. But, in the words of an election campaign in the United States a couple of years ago, "Where's the beef?" in respect of protecting people? The Bill is a major opportunity missed to reassure the public on food safety and public health. It does not provide real legislative teeth or the resources necessary for local authority enforcement officers to do their job properly.

Because of all the public concern about food safety and inadequate food quality, consumers deserve for the 1990s a comprehensive programme of action, funded by the Government, for food safety and public health. The public are not getting that in the Bill.

The Bill includes a few positive measures—the strengthening of the powers of local authority enforcement officers on improvement notices and prohibition orders, the wider definition of unfit food and improved seizure powers for suspect food, the raising of fines and penalties by a factor of 10 in relation to food which is injurious to health, mandatory hygiene training for certain categories of food handlers, the ability to bypass the immediate offender when it is appropriate to prosecute the real offender, and the lifting of Crown immunity, although there is exemption for both the Queen and the national security services. I wonder why the security services should still have immunity to poison people. Nevertheless, there is much in the Bill to be welcome.

However, many of the slices in this legislative sandwich are without filling from the point of view of consumers and enforcement officers. There is very little democratic improvement for consumers. The new consumer food panel will be small and toothless. The food safety directorate is just another name for civil servants and advisers. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food key Food Advisory Committee is one-sided, with eight representatives of the food industry versus five from medicine and local government and just one from consumer interests. That is bad. There is no independent food safety agency; the Bill ignores the chance to introduce one. It is necessary to get a new system of quality standard and co-ordinate the level of local inspection and enforcement.

I favour a licensing scheme for premises instead of the registration powers in the Bill. There should be prior approval from the local authority before anyone can operate a food business, and that licence should be renewed annually. If someone buys a car, we expect him to pass a driving test before he gets a driving licence to drive. It should be the same for food, and people should not be able to set up in the high street and feed a mass of people without having a proper licence.

From a London viewpoint, I support compulsory food hygiene training. There are special needs for those food handlers whose first language is not English. That is a case

for extra resources, particularly in an area such as London, where there is a high ethnic minority population and a need for the translation of material and multilingual training. My borough has made a start in this respect. I could give the House some examples, but time does not allow me to do so.

We need extra resources and funds to ensure the success of mandatory training for food handlers. The funds of £30 million promised to local authorities will, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) said, be swallowed up by the poll tax. In any case, that is a woefully inadequate figure and will not enable the officers to perform their tasks and meet their responsibilities.

The criteria for the distribution of those funds are wrong. I hope that they will not be distributed merely on a pro-rata basis—the number of food premises—or a system based on population because that would be unfair. The criteria should be based on deprivation and poverty indicators, taking into account a borough's housing, unemployment and other social issues. All those indicators reflect the standard of food outlets which those boroughs provide.

The issue of labelling has been confined to the Bill's regulations. However, all food should show the details of all the ingredients used in its production, including details of processing, chemical treatment and full nutritional labelling.

The London Food Commission and the Institution of Environmental Health Officers have said that the advantages and safety of food irradiation have not been clearly demonstrated and they are worried about unscrupulous people taking advantage of it. It may kill most of the bacteria, but it will leave harmful toxins in the product and destroy nutrients such as vitamins.

There should be a consumer education programme. I suggest a new levy on food advertisements, which could then be used on a health and consumer education programme. The Government should take the lead on that.

The Bill could have many more teeth. With the Bill the Government have warmed the plate, but they have not yet guaranteed a disease-free dinner on it for all our citizens.

8.54 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I shall be brief, because a number of the points that I wished to make have already been made ad nauseam. I start by declaring my interest: for 20 years I have been involved in licensed catering in the pub business. I still run pubs in London and, therefore, I have an interest in the Bill.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Minister has decided on registration rather than licensing. All licensed caterers are, by definition, already licensed by the justices. When licences are granted, environmental health officers have the opportunity to make representations to the court about whether they think that the prospective licensees are fit and proper people to run licensed catering establishments.

I am concerned by the enormity of the task confronting my right hon. Friend the Minister. It seems that the Bill will catch not only all licensed premises and unlicenced food shops and premises, but all shops retailing food and anyone who sells confectionery. Therefore, virtually every garage in the country will come within the net of the Bill. I wonder exactly how my right hon. Friend proposes to offer a proper enforcement service for registered food sellers.

Irradiation seems to have been covered by almost all the speakers in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), who has unfortunately had to leave the Chamber, summed up the issue admirably when he said that he saw it as just the latest in a chain of methods to preserve food beyond what might be called its natural shelf life. I am in favour of allowing irradiation on a strictly controlled basis, with the labelling for irradiated food promised by my right hon. Friend. I understand that, where finished and prepared food is offered on a plate, it is impossible to label it, but we are obliged, under other provisions, to show what we are going to serve by way of menus in windows and on tables. No doubt proper organisation of menus will allow us to show whether food has been irradiated.

My main point relates to enforcement. Environmental health officers, who tend to be generalists rather than specialists, already have a wide variety of duties. Undoubtedly the Bill will add substantially to their burdens. For some time there have been many vacancies for environmental health officers throughout the country. As long as 15 years ago, when I was vice-chairman of an environmental health committee, we had great difficulty in recruiting environmental health officers. There is nothing new about that, and the Bill will make even more urgent the need for more environmental health officers to be trained and recruited.

I wish to look beyond training and recruitment because I want a consistent standard of enforcement throughout the country. Unfortunately, all too often examples of personal prejudices influence the actions of environmental health officers. I suppose that the most notorious recent case was the capricious and vexatious prosecution of La Gavroche by the city of Westminster on the advice of its environmental health officers, Parker Brown and MacGregor.

It seems that not only individual EHOs have prejudices, but also local authorities. They sometimes regard this as a duty which they can use to extend their empire and act in a way that certainly builds up cynicism and scepticism on the part of those involved in the premises that come within their ambit.

There is a parallel with health and safety legislation; the same officers are responsible for the enforcement of health and safety legislation. It is possible to make almost any licensed catering premises unworkable by extreme zealousness and over-onerous demands for health and safety projects.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said, some environmental health officers make demands for tiling, untiling and retiling. I was asked to put tiles on the floor of a beer cellar. I do not know whether that environmental health officer had ever penetrated a beer cellar, but when a 10 or 22-gallon keg is dropped on a tile floor the tiles shatter. He seriously wanted me to tile the floor so that I could throw my barrels around and shatter the tiles. Because of instances such as that, we need to ensure—through secondary legislation, codes of practice, and the directions that my right hon. Friend the Minister must give—that we achieve consistent and sensible enforcement.

Some environmental health officers are extremely helpful with their advice and guidance. They give

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instruction to people who perhaps do not know as much as they should about food safety and food hygiene. They build up confidence and co-operation. It is a desirable aspiration of the Bill to build a partnership between environmental health officers—with their guidance and advice—and food sellers. The Bill should be regarded not as draconian, a penalty, or something that should be feared by food sellers, but as a sensible basis for their entirely proper and legitimate business. I wish my right hon. Friend well in taking the Bill through the House.

9 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I welcome the Bill, because 90 per cent. of it is positive and helpful. It will help to improve standards of hygiene in shops and to educate the consumer. My reaction to the Bill is similar to my reaction to the Environmental Protection Bill—I am a member of the Standing Committee on that Bill—as I think that it makes steps in the right direction, but they are small steps and the Bill has major omissions. For example, it does not tackle food production and processing; animal feeding at the farm; what is added to foods in food processing; pesticides; or intensive farming. We know that the problems of salmonella, and now of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, relate to animal feeding, yet the Bill contains nothing to remedy that. It attempts to blame the shopkeeper, the retailer and the housewife for the problems with food poisoning.

I am pleased to note that, if there is one topic that hon. Members from both sides of the House have focused on during the debate, it is food irradiation. However, food irradiation is hardly mentioned in the Bill—just two lines in clause 17. The ban on irradiation is being lifted by stealth, yet that is the part of the Bill with which most people are concerned.

When food is irradiated, the molecules are damaged. It breaks those molecules randomly and creates reactive species—free radicals. Those free radicals recombine in random ways to produce all types of products. I have no doubt that some of those will be carcinogenic and others mutagenic and that they present a hazard to life. The Minister has said countless times that that is not the case. However, most of the research work has been sponsored by the Atomic Energy Authority, so it is not neutral, like academic research, which has found kidney damage, chromosome damage and tumours in animals that have been fed on irradiated food. Academic research has shown evidence of the sort of damage that I expect to occur. The dosages involved are enormous—they are 10 times the maximum permitted in the United States. That is equivalent to 100 million chest X-rays. Those are lethal amounts.

Given the controversy surrounding irradiation, it is not surprising that it has been banned in most countries. It is allowed in only 35 out of 140 nations; in the remainder, there is a complete ban. That has been the position in Britain until now. Out of the 35 countries that allow irradiation, only 21 use it and then only on a narrow range of foods—so much so that less than 0·1 per cent. of one thousandth of food consumed in Europe is irradiated.

The Minister said earlier that there are problems with herbs and spices and that ethylene oxide is an unsatisfactory preservative. If we were concerned only with herbs and spices, I do not think that the National Federation of Women's Institutes and all the consumer organisations would be so much up in arms. My fear is that as irradiation comes into the Bill by stealth, there will be no proper definition of what food may be covered. It is clear to me by now that the Government intend it to cover a wide range of foods.

An article in *The Times* last Friday had the headline: "Irradiation 'could halve food poisoning'". It quoted Professor Bevan Moseley, the head of the institute of food research in Reading, as saying that, as poultrymeat is responsible for over half our salmonella cases, the problem would be halved with irradiated poultrymeat. It frightens me that the Government are thinking of irradiation as the major answer to the salmonella epidemic. The proper answer is to clean up factory farming and animal feeding, and to stop some of the current practices in farming. Two wrongs do not make a right and irradiation is a technological fix for a problem that should not exist in the first place. The real answer lies in clean farming.

The irradiation of poultry is allowed in only 11 countries in the world. In a parliamentary question this week, I asked how many countries used irradiation as a method of preservation for poultrymeat. The reply was that only two countries have used irradiation to some extent, whereas 138 countries have not. In other words, over 98 per cent. of the countries of the world do not use irradiation on poultrymeat. It disturbs me that Britain will be a leader in that very wrong direction.

Many hon. Members have referred to the problems of testing. There is no test for irradiation and it is significant that the tests being considered are for free radicals or mutagenic products. It gives the game away that the Government are considering those damaging materials as a method of testing irradiated foods.

The Government should listen to public opinion on this matter. It is overwhelmingly hostile. Many sorts of non-political organisations, the consumer groups and the supermarket chains have come out decisively against irradiation. The most important is the British Medical Association which is cautionary in its attitude to food irradiation. I hope that when the Bill receives a detailed consideration, the Government will withdraw the provisions dealing with food irradiation.

9.7 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I know that there is a shortage of time before my hon. Friend the Minister has to reply, so I shall try to be as brief as possible. Nobody can be opposed to the Bill, based as it is on the principle of providing greater protection for the consumer. The question is whether it achieves that laudable aim and whether it goes far enough. Those questions especially concern me, as my right hon. Friend the Minister is aware. My constituency suffered the worst ever food poisoning outbreak—as the media said, perhaps in their usual exaggerated fashion. However, it was the most severe this century in western Europe. Five hundred and twenty-one people were infected by salmonella typhimurium, 54 of them were admitted to hospital and two subsequently died. That occurred at the end of July 1989.

On 6 November 1989, the Welsh Office launched an internal review of the handling of that outbreak to learn lessons for the future. It said that the review's findings would be considered in connection with the Bill. The

review is still being carried out, and it will be another month before it is completed. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could give me an assurance that the review's recommendations, where appropriate, will be incorporated in the Bill in Committee. That is not only very important to me and to my constituents. These are lessons of national application.

The Bill will provide the Minister with flexible powers to make regulations, as many hon. Members have said. Having read through the written evidence submitted to the Welsh Office internal review from Clwyd health authority and Delyn borough council, I know that they did not agree on much, but there are two points on which they agreed which I want to bring to my hon. Friend's attention.

Food businesses involved in the preparation, retailing and distribution of "high risk" foods, prepared foods such as cooked meats, should be placed under a statutory duty to maintain complete and accurate lists of food outlets to which any such food has been distributed, and those lists should be immediately available on demand to local authority EHOs. They should also be under a statutory duty to fix to individual wrappings of food clearly legible labels identifying the packer and preparer of the food, together with the date of its preparation.

During the salmonella outbreak in north Wales and in the north-west last July, lists of food outlets from the two companies implicated were not immediately available. In fact, they took a day to complete, and they were then incomplete, and they had to be added to over succeeding days. They were incomplete because of inadequate records, even though computers were available.

Labelling must be detailed and rationalised to enable the tracing of the source of a product so that detailed warnings can be given to the consumer. During last summer's outbreak, there was a lack of information which led to unsatisfactory blanket warnings being given to the public. Those were the two points on which the health authority and Delyn borough council are agreed, and they are both important.

Clause 20 allows for registration and licensing, although it allows for licensing only when "necessary or expedient", as the Bill says. I regard that as too flexible, too loose. I want a licensing system for all "high risk" food premises—in other words, those dealing with open foods—giving local authorities the power to refuse or withdraw licences.

Clause 24 covers training, and many hon. Members have dealt with that issue. The provision says:

> "A food authority may provide . . . training courses in food hygiene for persons . . . involved in food businesses".

I would prefer it to say that an authority should provide training courses. Indeed, such authorities should be under a statutory duty to do so. Of the 118 positive cases of salmonella in Delyn last July-August, 28 were food handlers, a quarter of the total. That indicates the importance of food hygiene training for all food handlers, and that training should be updated every three years.

As for the financial and manpower effects of the Bill, it is extraordinary—as the Minister conceded on 27 July of last year, when he made his original statement—that there are no centrally held statistics covering local authorities' expenditure and time spent on enforcing food law. He said that he was sending out a questionnaire to local authorities to obtain details of exactly how much time EHOs were spending on that aspect of their activities. He rightly said that they had a wide range of activities—in my view, far too wide. There are not enough of them, as many hon. Members have said during the debate. I hope that, when replying to the debate, the Minister will say whether those questionnaires have all been returned to the Department and if they will be published.

The Bill creates new tasks which will require new staff. Much has been said about the extra £30 million to which my right hon. Friend referred in his opening speech. I find that a suspiciously round figure. I accept that it has been worked out according to a scientific formula, as my right hon. Friend said, but I should like know exactly how the calculation was done.

Many environmental health departments are understaffed and underfinanced. There is widespread belief in Delyn borough council that the EHD is the Cinderella of the council. The deputy chief environmental health officer has admitted that

> "less than the ideal level of service is provided."

That is borne out by the fact that the inspection of food shops and factories occurs only every two years. In 1988, only half the premises which should have been inspected were inspected. It is important to increase the number of inspections.

Following the salmonella outbreak, Delyn decided to do that and to crack down on food premises, and the number of inspections will be raised from once every two years to eventually twice a year, although initially to once every nine months. That alone requires one extra member of staff. In other words, Delyn is having to increase its staff even before undertaking the tasks imposed by the Bill. That is a measure of the cost to environmental health departments if they are to fulfil their functions properly.

There are other important aspects of the Bill which I do not have time to cover because I am anxious to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) to take part in the debate. I allowed myself seven minutes and I have one minute to go.

One final point I wish to raise is, who is in charge in the event of a food poisoning outbreak? A circular from the Department of Health says:

> "The question whether a health authority or local authority should have overall lead responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious disease remains undecided".

That is appalling. We have had a similar confusing circular from the Welsh Office. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health should get together with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and sort out who is in charge. It is now clear who should be in charge during the outbreak last July-August and the result was chaos, a lot of unnecessary mud-slinging and friction between the health authority and the borough council. This is a national issue and it must be resolved before the next major outbreak which, tragically, is bound to happen sooner or later.

9.15 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) for speaking so briefly and giving me a chance to join in the debate. It has been said that anything worth saying can be said in four minutes, and I shall attempt to put that principle into practice.

I have an interest to declare and I hope that I have a slight knowledge of the subject because I am chairman of

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the Food Hygiene Bureau, a company which, as my right hon. Friend the Minister knows, is the largest food hygiene consultancy in the country. We advise people on standards of hygiene, train their staff and look after any emergencies that arise.

I am deeply involved in the hygiene industry, and in that capacity, I warmly welcome the Bill. It covers adequately the need to tighten up hygiene regulations and I am sure that it will go a long way to prevent a recurrence of the food poisoning outbreaks of 1989. The latest available figures show that 21,843 cases were reported in the first nine months of last year, and that is only the tip of the iceberg. Many people who fall ill from food poisoning do not identify the subject of it or do not bother to report it.

There are two matters on which I should like to comment briefly. The first concerns the regulations. I have to confess to Ministers that I am concerned at the amount of power that they are taking to themselves in clauses 17 and 18 and schedule 1. It is a worry that future Governments will have such enormous powers to make rules, regulations and laws without returning to the House for approval and I am concerned about the provision in clause 18(1) whereby any Community obligation can be brought into effect in this country by way of such regulations. If I understand the position correctly, that will mean that a Community directive that would normally involve legislation in the House could bypass the House and go straight into the law of the land by means of ministerial regulation. That is not desirable, and I hope that the point can be further examined as the Bill proceeds through the House.

The other main issue on which almost every hon. Member who has spoken has touched is the irradiation of food. The first question is, "Is it safe?" I believe that it is 99·9 per cent. safe. There is still a query over the effects that pesticides and other chemicals that have clung to the food that is to be irradiated may suffer. There is certainly a possibility of both molecular and chemical change in those pesticides that could be harmful to humans who consume the food. But it is a minute risk, which I believe to be heavily outweighed by the benefits that irradiation can confer.

I would name just two. For some foods, irradiation is a far better treatment than any other available. The treatment of spices is a case in point. Spices are normally dried outside in their country of origin and are heavily contaminated. At the moment, they are often treated with toxic chemicals that could have a harmful effect on the humans who consume them. Irradiation treatment will be very much safer than the practice that we follow at the moment for lack of an alternative.

Secondly, as has been mentioned, the treatment deals with salmonella and listeria. Given the fuss that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) rightly made about the dangers from those two sources of contamination——

Dr. David Clark *indicated dissent.*

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Ah, well. It certainly came up.

I should have hoped for a greater welcome for the irradiation process. There is a real need to have the products labelled—a point that I raised in my question to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

There are three other items that I wish to fire off so that they can be considered at a later stage. First, I note that tap water is not included in the Bill. Tap water, of course, is a major potential source of infestation. I know that it is being dealt with in the European Community by water directives. I know that we have many water regulations coming through. Perhaps that is why it has not been included here. Perhaps the Minister who is to reply would answer that point.

Next there is the question of food temperature, which, rather to my surprise, has not been mentioned today. It is the key to safe food handling. The temperature of food at all stages of the handling process, from manufacture to consumption, is of critical interest and importance. In transit and in the case of chilled foods in supermarkets, in particular, there are real dangers that controls at present are not adequate. There is also the problem that most of the measuring instruments used are not sufficiently accurate for people to be able to ensure that the foods are being or have been stored at the proper temperature. I hope that better equipment will shortly be available to enable that to be done.

Again, charitable events have not been mentioned in our debate, although they were referred to in the other House. I am a little concerned that the marvellous work done by all our charitable workers might be affected by the fact that people face the possibility of a two-year prison sentence and an unlimited fine if they inadvertently give anybody food poisoning. While I accept that people who go to charitable events need protection, I wonder whether penalties in those cases should be rather less than the penalties for some of the offences that the Bill prescribes.

My final point concerns the training of environmental health officers. A sum of £30 million is being provided to help to deal with this new Bill. I believe that, if that goes direct to local authorities, it will be largely wasted. I do not think that the Government will be able to keep adequate control over the way in which it is spent. I would far rather see that money go towards provision for the training of more environmental health officers to a higher standard so that we can be sure that the Bill will be properly monitored.

In summary, it is a very good Bill and goes a long way towards meeting the needs of the times. Lord Gallacher, leading for the Opposition in the other place, said:

"It is a Bill which, with some improvements, can meet the needs of the times."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 December 1989; Vol. 513, c. 761.]

I am glad that, largely I believe, hon. Members on all sides of the House agree on the value of and the need for this legislation.

9.22 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): The Opposition obviously recognise the expertise of the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) in this matter. It is appropriate that all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have curtailed their speeches so as to allow the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to speak.

I must say briefly how pleased I am to see the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) in the Chamber today. I know that he has been hospitalised and has had to make his regular television appearances from his bed, so it is nice

to see that he has recovered sufficiently to join us. The fact that he has a majority of only 1,200 and is likely to make rather fewer speeches in the House in future is another reason for us to welcome him today.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food opened the debate this evening with a 40-minute speech. Most of it was good stuff and quite relevant to the debate, but I have to tell him that a person who opens a debate, takes 40 minutes of House of Commons time and then leaves the Chamber while half a dozen of his hon. Friends and half a dozen Opposition Members make contributions to the debate is guilty of gross discourtesy not only to his hon. Friends and to Opposition Members but to the House itself.

It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman did not have the courtesy of his hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who explained that he had a long-standing engagement and could not be present for the winding-up speeches. That is an honourable and acceptable course of action. It is an apology that we fully accept, as we have accepted apologies from other hon. Members who have spoken. It is a pity that the Minister cannot live up to any decent standards.

While I am dealing with the Minister, I draw his attention to one further matter. During the course of the debate, five of his hon. Friends had recourse to the civil service Box to consult civil servants about the content of their speeches. Every Member of this place knows that civil servants do not attend the Chamber for the purpose of advising Back Benchers on how to make political speeches. I am notifying the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of what happened this evening and I leave the matter with him in the expectation that he will put his house in order. I warn him that if he does not do so, I shall refer the matter to the House authorities with the intention of making sure that it does not happen again.

I turn to the Bill itself—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Delyn and others wish to delay the House, I put it on record so that there is no misunderstanding, that there are other parts of the Bill's consideration that are to be dealt with this evening. If I have to face such barracking, I shall be happy to make sure that the House sits for the full time that has been allocated to it and that we arrange for Divisions to take place.

Mr. Raffan: Get on with it.

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Member for Delyn wishes to continue barracking, perhaps he should consult the Government Whip to ascertain whether that is an appropriate course of action for him to take.

Mr. Raffan: Pathetic.

Mr. Davies: We, the Opposition, have said that we welcome the Bill. We do not welcome it as enthusiastically, for example, as the hon. Member for Upminster. We have considerable reservations. As a tidying-up operation, there is much to commend it. The replacement of seven Acts with one is the kind of rationalisation that would be helpful across the huge body of statutory law. The Bill covers an area in which a legislative update is overdue. Changes in food technology and popular tastes have rendered existing legislation archaic in areas such as food manufacturing, preparation and retailing.

The Bill starts with a definition of food. It is carefully crafted to negotiate the difficult problem of foods which are alive, and live animals and fish which are not regarded as foods until they are dead. In another sense, the Bill ignores the basics. However welcome some of the measures that it contains may be, the Bill is not a substitute for a healthy food policy. The tightest of safeguards can ensure only that the consumer does not perish through poisoning. They do nothing to provide protection against death through malnutrition or diet-related illness.

Food law should embrace the ways in which the health of the consumer can be improved as well as providing the means by which it can be protected. Instead, the Government's refusal to develop a healthy food policy on the eccentric ground that freedom of choice includes the right to obesity or starvation means that our national diet has reached an historic low point. If anyone doubts what I say, I refer him to the national food survey for 1988—the most recent year available—which contains the dismal observation that the nutritional value of food eaten in Britain's homes is the lowest ever recorded.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I am curtailing my speech to take account of the speeches made by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. I am sorry, but I must proceed. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be selected to help consider the Bill in Committee, when we shall have the opportunity to examine these matters further.

The survey showed also, not surprisingly, that the diet of the poorest sections of society is considerably less healthy than that of the better-off. Partly as a consequence, Britain is in the shameful position of having a widening gap between the health status of the rich and that of the poor. The incidence of diet-related illness graphically confirms the divide. For example, tooth loss, which is clearly related to diet, is five times as common in socio-economic group 5 as in group 1. Chronic heart disease is twice as common in the lower socio-economic groups as in the higher. Body weight could hardly be more closely related to diet. The lowest groups show disproportionately high levels of obesity.

The Bill does nothing to address those problems. Ideally, an improved version of it would include a package of measures to enhance the nutritional as well as the hygienic quality of our food, but the Government's doctrinaire attitude to those matters, which is obviously shared by some of the Minister's hon. Friends—the let-them-eat-cake approach—prevents the Government from championing the idea that people should be encouraged as a matter of policy to enjoy a diet that is good for them.

I am not suggesting even a whiff of compulsion, but the Opposition think it sensible where possible to use the powers available to Government to promote healthy eating, rather than insisting that, if consumer ignorance results in unhealthy diets, that is the consumer's perogative. It would be heartening to think that that might be a bipartisan approach. It used to be, but not any longer.

Why, if it were the Government's intention to promote healthy diet, did they abolish, for example, nutrition standards for school meals? School meals were introduced for the very reason that the children of the least well-off were at risk from poor nutrition. For some children in my consituency and in those of many of my hon. Friends, they were the only nutritionally balanced regular meal. That was why my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr.

[Mr. Davies]

Lloyd) tried to reintroduce nutrition standards in school meals, but his attempt failed in the teeth of Government opposition.

Nutritional labelling clearly has a potentially important role to play in increasing the freedom of choice, and provision is made in the Bill for that. That freedom of choice is meaningful only where the consumer has the necessary information. Voluntary labelling is not the answer. Under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food voluntary scheme introduced in 1987, assessed in a Consumers Association survey in May 1989, comprehensive information with which to make an informed choice was available on only 3·5 per cent. of the sample of more than 400 goods.

By agreeing to a voluntary scheme for Europe, the Government have found themselves in the dilemma of how to encourage the maximum disclosure of information useful to the consumer without making that so onerous as to result in manufacturers refusing to label their products at all. The Government have resolved that problem to the complete satisfaction of the sugar lobby—substantial contributors to Tory party funds—by subsuming sugar content into the figure for carbohydrate, which also includes nutritionally beneficial starch, and removing the distinctions on labels between saturated and unsaturated fats.

If the consumer is left in ignorance about the levels of saturated fats and sugar, what is the point of the label? Those are the most important considerations and both are currently left out. The whole issue of improved nutrition labelling is entirely left out of the Bill. I am pleased to say that the hon. Memer for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) made that point in a useful and enlighted contribution to the debate.

On a similar theme, do the Government not recognise the substantial and growing market for foods grown without the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides and animals which are raised and slaughtered in humane conditions? That was precisely the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise).

As an advocate both of natural production methods and of animal welfare, I celebrate the growing interest in organic and extensive production, but where are the clauses in the Bill to ensure that only food which legitimately meets the claim "organic" or "humanely produced" is so labelled? Why is there nothing in the Bill to ensure that those of us who wish to avoid eating the products of animals slaughtered without stunning can do so by studying a label? That is a major defect in the Bill.

There is also an overwhelming case for the replacement of the sell-by labelling arrangement with a compulsory use-by system. The recent report of the Richmond committee on the microbial safety of food recommends exactly that. When the Government, who claim to be determined to follow scientific advice, receive scientific advice which they dislike they are happy to ignore it. Recommendation after recommendation of the Richmond committee has been rejected by the Government. Will the Minister guarantee that the regulations to be introduced under the Bill will implement that particular recommendation of the Richmond committee? Will he guarantee that those provisions will be compulsory and enforceable? At the moment, not only is the Bill silent on those important issues, but it is so restrictively drafted as to render detailed debate on the subject at risk of being ruled out of order.

If free choice means informed choice—as it does—the Government's commitment must be called into question, to judge by their record of obscurantism in those and other examples.

Having considered some of the issues that the Bill fails to tackle, I shall consider the adequacy or otherwise or what it contains. The debate on registration and licensing is still unresolved. In Committee, hon. Members expressed views and recognised the strength of the argument for licensing as opposed to registration. Major uncertainties remain over enforcement, not to mention the vexed question of irradiation, which has been the subject of many good speeches today.

By rejecting expert advice from expert advisers—from practitioners and people who are responsible for operating the regulations—and not going for a system of licensing, the Government are choosing a reactive rather than a proactive approach to the protection of public health.

To a considerable extent, this is a choice between prophylaxis and cure. Whether they are the local government officers who will have to enforce the Bill when it is enacted or the doctors and public health specialists who will treat consumers whom the Bill fails to protect, practitioners unanimously favour prophylaxis. The Government, in their pursuit of the free market and by persistently championing producer rather than consumer interests, have opted for the reactive approach—for cure rather than prevention.

There is to be no provision in the Bill for the licensing of food premises, other than those premises involved in food irradiation. The Bill merely requires a food business to provide four weeks advance notice of its intention to open. That fact will be recorded on a register and that will be that—the food business will be in operation.

Clearly, under the system of registration as opposed to licensing, the local authority would benefit because it would be fulfilling its public protection role more successfully if it prevented the opening of sub-standard premises rather than seeking to close them down using the courts after the damage has been done, with all the expense that that involves for traders, consumers and local authorities. However, it is not only the local authority which benefits. The trader, who is advised before committing large sums of money, will be advised on what exactly will be required to ensure that the premises meet the necessary standard and will also benefit from that advice before he starts his operation.

The Richmond committee clearly reached the same conclusions because it said:

"in order adequately to protect the public health, there is considerable advantage in prior inspection and approval before a food business is opened or a process started".

The Government claim time after time to recognise and act on expert advice, but on this occasion, they have received expert advice which they dislike and they choose to ignore it. The Richmond committee clearly reached that conclusion.

The Government have opted for a system that no one has asked for—a four-week period of notice from a nascent food business, during which it is presumably hoped that the environmental health department will go along and pay a visit. That is neither one thing nor the other. There will be no obligation for an EHO to inspect

the premises. Due to Government under-funding of local authorities, very few have the staff or the resources to ensure that such a visit takes place. None the less, if food premises open without prior inspection and a case of food poisoning or worse occurs, the local authority will be guilty of having failed to pay such a visit and to protect public health. If the Government are serious and want public inspections, let it be clear that they are serious—let them accept that the case for regulation is overwhelming.

If the Government persist in refusing to allow licensing rather than registration, enforcement becomes more important, although by definition it is after the event and therefore less desirable than prevention. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) recognised that in his contribution to the debate.

According to a recent report from the Hereford and Worcester trading standards department, out of a total of 303 food products examined, 114 broke the statutory requirements. A finger from a rubber glove was found in a fish pie, chewing gum in a biscuit, a chicken claw in a Chinese meal, slugs in peas, a fly in a sardine sandwich and a previously sucked sweet in a tub of margarine. That is all very unpleasant, but not so potentially dangerous as other things that were found—a knife blade in a soft drink can, a sewing needle in a loaf of bread and glass in 12 different packaged foodstuffs. With such hazards to contend with, enforcement is clearly a major priority and the inspection of premises which are merely registered without being licensed will go by the board.

Time and again, when I speak to the people at the sharp end—those who see the problems at first hand, and know what needs to be done—I am told that the real problem is lack of staff and resources to implement even the existing legislation, let alone the new requirements. Increased demands and new responsibilities for enforcement action, fewer local resources as a result of cuts in local authority spending and the reduction in EHO vacancies all combine to form a pattern which will undermine the effectiveness of enforcement action. That point was made by the hon. Members for York (Mr. Gregory) and for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). The Bill does nothing to redress the balance.

The question of funding has been raised by many of my hon. Friends, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise). The Bill states:

> "The additional cost for local authorities is likely to be of the order of £30 million a year from 1991-1992 onwards. This will be taken into account in next year's Revenue Support Grant Settlement."

The reality behind the phrase "taken into account" is that the new money is unlikely to be found—that is why the Minister chose that phrase. Increased weight may well be given to the food inspection expenditure head in the calculation of the overall revenue support grant, but I have no doubt that it will be offset by reductions elsewhere and by the Government's overall policy of cutting revenue support grant. In other words, the increase will be only notional and authorities will have to finance the new service by reordering their existing priorities. Given the turmoil caused by the introduction of the poll tax and the attempts of embattled councils to minimise the impact of the charge on residents, it is unlikely that the new responsibilities will be properly discharged.

Lest the Minister deny what I am saying, I will ask him a specific question. Will he give an undertaking that the £30 million implementation costs—that is his estimate—will either be added as a specific and identified sum to the total standard spending calculations, or will be added as a specified and additional sum to the total level of revenue support grant? If the Bill is to mean anything, that is what needs to be done. Without those additional resources, embattled local authorities trying to maintain standards and comply with the requirements placed on them by central Government will be unable to do so.

We are very concerned about irradiation. My hon. Friends the Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), as experts on the matter, made compelling speeches. I assure the House—I know that many Conservative Members will want to know this—that we shall table an amendment on irradiation to allow the whole House to decide on the issue.

The Minister claims to be the listening Minister, so why is he not listening now? Why does he not listen to the former Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner)? Having spent seven years in the Ministry, she is clearly unhappy about irradiation. Why does he not listen to the hon. Member for Davyhulme, who made a powerful and compelling speech against irradiation?

The Minister was happy enough to say to the National Farmers Union a few weeks ago, "I listened and I acted." He said it three or four times. Why does he not listen to all the consumer groups? Why does he not listen to the 84 per cent. of people who say that they do not want irradiated food? Why does he not listen to all those who are concerned about the quality of our food? Apparently he can listen to the farmers but not to the consumers.

We shall pursue in Committee the other matters about which we are unhappy. The amendment already made, which removes some of the unwarranted secrecy that had been written into the Bill, is to be welcomed. Nevertheless, too much secrecy remains. We shall have more to say about that later. According to the Bill, education and training are to be improved, but the Government's record gives us no cause for confidence. We shall examine later what lies behind their intentions. We shall also want to secure assurances from Ministers that regulations promulgated under the Bill are properly and openly debated when they are made.

I have no doubt that the Bill can be considerably improved before it returns to the House. With that hope, while recognising that the Bill as drafted is but a figleaf to cover the Government's poor record on diet and public health, we give the Bill not a warm but an acquiescent welcome and shall not oppose its Second Reading.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am very glad that the Bill has received a broad welcome from Members on both sides of the House. I am sorry that the time available to me, just 14 minutes, will not allow me to answer all the questions that have been raised by hon. Members. I shall write to those Members whose questions I do not answer. I am sure that they will accept my apologies for not dealing with all their points now.

The Government welcome the Richmond committee's recommendations, which have been broadly accepted. Its work was thorough. We thank all the members of the committee.

You may be wondering, Mr. Speaker, why a Department of Health Minister is winding up the debate.

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

It is because my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), who is specifically responsible for food safety—and the Department of Health work closely together on food safety. The Department of Health is responsible for public food hygiene and microbiological contamination. I meet my opposite number at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on many occasions to discuss issues of mutual concern.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) asked a number of questions. Unfortunately, I have time to deal only with the key ones. He asked where we stand in the world league table in terms of food surveillance. We have the best food safety surveillance system in the world. I say that without any qualification. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I visited the public health laboratory service earlier this week. It is responsible for monitoring food poisoning outbreaks. We were much impressed by what we saw. I am pleased that the public health laboratory service is soon to introduce a major new computing system to ensure that information on food poisoning outbreaks reaches the centre in Colindale and that it is then dispersed to the appropriate authorities responsible for food safety. That is a major new advance.

As for the suggestion by the hon. Member for South Shields that there should be an independent food standards agency, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is accountable to Parliament for policy, as are other Ministers. We have independent advice from expert committees. The hon. Member for South Shields has not, I believe, persuaded the House that an independent food standards agency would lead to any improvement.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the food research that has been carried out at Bristol. The two food research centres at Reading and Norwich are now larger and more efficient. The Government are to spend more in the coming year, in real terms, on food research than they spent last year. The hon. Gentleman does not want any change in the organisation of food research. By implication, he denies the Government's responsibility to make food research more effective.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) referred to the £30 million which is to go to the local authorities. I assure the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) that this is all new money and that all of it will go, by means of revenue support grant, to local authorities. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) misread the Bill or the financial memorandum. I give her the commitment or assurance that she sought. It will be new money, and in fixing the sum or the order of magnitude the Government consulted enforcement authorities and the local authority associations.

The hon. Member for South Shields referred to irradiation, as did many other hon. Members. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Swindon (Mr. Coombs), for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) for their support for the concept of irradiation. It is not true to say that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is promoting irradiation. No one is promoting irradiation. The Government are seeking to facilitate irradiation. Several hon. Members have got the issue way out of proportion. If the Bill is passed, and if regulations to be laid before the House are passed, a tiny proportion of British food available for consumption in the United Kingdom will have been irradiated.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) were right to draw the attention of the House to the concerns of many, including women's institutes. They will have the right to choose whether to consume irradiated food. I can give my hon. Friend the Member for Medway the assurance that she sought: we shall take every step to make sure that the food is properly labelled, and my right hon. Friend the Minister will consult various advisory panels to make sure that the labelling of irradiated food is clear and in no way misleading.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked why we were anticipating measures in Europe. The EC bodies do not provide advice on health aspects. The Government have listened to the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations which has said that irradiation is safe, the United Kingdom Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods, the British Nutrition Foundation, the Medical Research Council and many others. Those are the right bodies in which we should place our confidence.

The hon. Gentleman also asked why we need to have the process if the food is wholesome. There may be a misunderstanding about the consequences of salmonella and listeria on the wholesomeness of food. As the hon. Gentleman will know, in many food processes it is not possible completely to eradicate those bugs. Irradiation can eliminate them or seek to eliminate them. That will certainly mean that the shelf life of irradiated foods can be longer than would otherwise be the case, but it is a sensible process of treating food, like freezing, canning or curing. It cannot make unfit food fit for consumption. If it is unfit in the first place, my right hon. Friend will ban it.

I hope that I have dealt with the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Medway about the public perception. She is right to remind the House that, despite the arguments that the Government have taken into account on the health aspect of irradiation, many members of the public are concerned and will not buy the food. It is their right so to choose. The Government's responsibility is to make sure that the food is properly labelled so that an informed choice can be made.

The Government are also satisfied that there are no health risks to those who choose to buy and consume irradiated food. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who has apologised for his early departure, raised a number of points. He expressed his concern that the House will not have the opportunity to debate the regulations on irradiation. There will be full consultation on the regulations and an opportunity in due course for the House to debate them under the negative resolution procedure.

Several of my hon. Friends asked the valid question how one can test whether food has been irradiated. There are no tests at present to identify whether food has been irradiated. However, it is quite clear that the process of licensing, the process of official inspection, the process of making sure that there is proper documentation at the few factories that might choose, under licence, to proceed with

irradiation, are sufficient. Indeed, the United States Food and Drug Administration is perfectly satisfied that that procedure provides the correct controls. I cite again the view of the World Health Organisation:

"Irradiation could be of enormous value in dealing with the major food problems of developing countries."

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), who has gone, my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West mentioned the shortage of environmental health officers. We believe that there are about 400 vacancies—about 8 per cent. of the total complement—in the country. Most of the vacancies, of course, are in London and the south-east. However, the number of student environmental health officers entering training increased from 207 in 1985 to 289 in 1989. I hope that that trend will continue. There is also scope to use less qualified staff to carry out some tasks, thus freeing the more highly qualified officers for tasks for which their qualifications are necessary. The Audit Commission is studying environmental health departments to determine whether their organisation and efficiency might be improved.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for South Shields, mentioned the question of training places for student officers. It was right that they should do so. I have already mentioned the increase in the number of students. A course at Bristol polytechnic, which started in January this year, will provide a new postgraduate opportunity for EHO training. A course at King's college, London university, will start next September, and discussions are taking place about increasing EHO training facilities at Birmingham university, Manchester polytechnic and Hatfield polytechnic. The right hon. Member for Halton spoke also about hygiene training in schools. He might like to know that the new science core curriculum makes provision for such training. Children will have to learn the elements of food hygiene.

My hon. Friends the Members for Medway, Gloucestershire, West, and Ludlow (Mr. Gill) the hon. Member for Rutherglen, my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) talked in particular about training for food handlers. This is a vital matter. The Government have issued a consultation document on methods of training food handlers, and we want to receive responses by 30 June. The codes of practice on which the implementation advisory committee will be advising—perhaps playing a part in drawing up—will deal with the great issue of trying to make standards of enforcement as even as possible throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) talked about registration. I do not agree with what he said. Under our proposals, registration will be as of right. Enforcement officers, the EHOs, will have a great battery of powers —warning, advice, prosecution, closure—and, indeed, Ministers themselves will have powers to issue emergency control orders. That is the simpler, less bureaucratic way of control, of ensuring high food standards in this country. Notification four weeks prior to opening will allow environmental health officers to visit premises and provide advice.

I hope that I have dealt with the point of the hon. Member for Preston about the £30 million. This matter was raised by the hon. Member for Caerphilly. I hope that I have made the position quite clear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon, rightly, welcomed the advisory committee—the consumer voice —that my right hon. Friend announced today. My hon. Friend asked about Ministers' powers. Under clause 43, Ministers will have the power to intervene, but we want local authorities to take first responsibility.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) raised the question of listeriosis and of the chief medical officer's decision, in February last year, to issue warnings to pregnant women, in particular, about soft cheese. That was a complicated jigsaw. He acted correctly, at the right time, not too late and certainly not too early. The Department supports him. It has taken time to establish that listeria can be carried by food and that it could affect the unborn child. We fully support the chief medical officer in his decisions.

The Bill, which I commend to the House, will improve standards of food safety. I am glad that all hon. Members support its Second Reading. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion relating to the Food Safety Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Food Safety Bill *[Lords] [Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Food Safety Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(1) any remuneration or allowances payable to the chairmen of tribunals constituted in accordance with regulations made under the Act;

(2) any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown by virtue of the Act; and

(3) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): You were in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, for the earlier part of the debate and you will have heard questions being raised about the £30 million. Paragraph (3) of the money resolution refers to

"any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment."

I assume that that is a reference to the additional £30 million. I think that I am grateful to the Under-Secretary of State for Health for his statement that it will be new money. I want to press the point further because I am not sure that we have had an adequate explanation.

The part of the preamble that deals with the financial effects of the Bill says:

"The additional cost for local authorities is likely to be of the order of £30 million a year from 1991-1992 onwards. This will be taken into account in next year's Revenue Support Grant Settlement."

That means in effect that, when the Treasury and the Department of the Environment, in consultation with other Departments, are assessing the total acceptable expenditure on which the revenue support grant is based, they will have to give different weightings to different expenditure heads. For example, if Parliament, under the new Environmental Protection Bill, gives additional responsibility to local authorities in respect of environmental protection, additional weighting will be given to that expenditure head. I assume that equally in the case of the Food Safety Bill additional weight will be given to the heading of environmental health protection.

That is different from providing new money. The Bill does not say that new money will be available; it says that consideration will be given to it. That means that additional weight may be given to that expenditure head. But if lesser weighting is given to, for example, refuse collection because the Government consider that privatisation will lead to savings, that will mean that the Government will assess a lower level of expenditure for the year that the Act is in operation than for the previous year when it was not in operation. Taken with the impact of expenditure cuts, it may mean that, once the legislation is in operation, local authorities will receive less money, even though they have extra responsibilities.

The Minister may be able to clear the matter up. He may be prepared to give us further information. I shall put specific points to him and hopefully we can then complete the rest of the business with expedition. Can he explain why the second paragraph on the financial effects of the Bill does not read: "The additional cost for local authorities is likely to be of the order of £30 million a year from 1991-92 onwards and an additional sum will be added to the Revenue Support Grant settlement in respect of that expenditure"? We would know precisely what that meant. It would mean that the Government have calculated that the additional cost will be £30 million and that the money will be provided. The preamble does not say that. Can the Minister explain why?

Obviously the Minister has had discussions with local authorities and has done a calculation. Can he tell us how much of the £30 million will go to county councils for trading standards enforcement and how much will go to district councils? If he has done a calculation and knows how much it will cost, he must have some idea of the burden that will fall on the counties and on the districts, because both will have additional responsibilities under the Bill. Can he tell us the division between trading standards officers and environmental health officers?

Thirdly, will the Minister give an undertaking to explain this matter? During the past couple of days I have spoken to many local authorities and local authority associations. Frankly, they do not have a clue about how the money will be provided or distributed. They know that they will have additional responsibilities, but they do not know whether there will be any new money or whether the money available will be so allocated that the authorities that, at present, have a lower level of service will use it to bring themselves up or authorities with a good level of service will be penalised because they already meet the standards.

Will the Minister give an assurance that he will meet the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and COSLA and explain to them precisely what will happen, what his calculations are and how the money will be allocated and distributed? If the Minister can give some satisfactory answers, we might not have to push this matter to a vote.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are debating the money resolution and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has raised matters which are directly relevant to it. There is no Treasury Minister on the Front Bench to respond to those points, a number of which directly relate to the Treasury's responsibility—particularly the allocation of money in terms of the revenue support grant for future years, of which the £30 million is a part. What Treasury authority has the Minister who is to reply to this debate to make his response? Will he be unable to answer the points made by my hon. Friend?

Mr. Speaker: Who the Government put up to answer the debate is not a matter for the Chair.

10.6 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): Perhaps I can help the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), although that I feel he was trying to make bricks without straw. I found it extraordinary that when the statement was made that the £30 million would be taken into account in the revenue support grant, he and other Opposition Members asked whether that was new money. When, in winding up the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister made it quite clear that it was new money, the hon. Gentleman sought to get even greater promises and commitments from the Government.

The hon. Gentleman asked why we expressed the issue in the Bill in that way. That is the normal way in which we always express it. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is the problem."] I do not know why hon. Members suddenly want us to break new ground in this Bill. We have made the commitment and chosen to express it in the time-honoured formula, and I am content to do that.

As for how the money will be carved up between the district and county councils, it is far too early in this financial year to come to a firm conclusion now. We have calculated what we think is the appropriate amount of money for the extra responsibilities that the Bill will entail. Of course, through the normal revenue support grant rules, we shall have discussions with the local authorities nearer the time, to go through the details of the matter. It would be inappropriate of me to make any comments or commitments on that tonight, when we are some time away from implementation.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I understand the Minister's problem, but surely the real problem is that one would assume that some estimate of how the money was to be divided among the various authorities would have to be made in order to make the calculation. It is hard to understand how the calculation could otherwise be made. Will the Minister also respond to the question that I asked during the debate: how much allowance has been made for setting up the new facilities, which is a different cost from the on-going cost?

Mr. Maclean: We have made no calculations—[HON. MEMBERS: "That is the problem."] Let me rephrase that. The calculations for which the hon. Gentleman asks and the issue of how we shall disperse the money are, at this stage, premature. We have made calculations on the cost of implementing the Bill's details. We have been thorough in those calculations and consulted the local authorities involved. Nearer the time, we shall again consult the local authorities.

My colleagues in the Department of the Environment, who will carry out the normal consultation processes with the local authorities, will discuss with them how the extra £30 million—the new money that my hon. Friend described—will be allocated towards the different responsibilities which the Bill will entail. The Government may make the calculation that the additional costs are £30 million, but the local authorities may decide to spend that money in a different way.

Opposition Members would not find it acceptable for the Government to dictate to the local authorities exactly how that money should be spent. We can allocate money and make calculations under various headings, but if local authorities decide to use that money for other measures, we have no real power to do anything about that.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): If the £30 million—which has somehow been estimated without making calculations—is new money, will the Minister assure the House that no local authority that has functions under the Bill will receive less money in the next financial year than it has in this financial year?

Mr. Maclean: What an extraordinary question to ask at this stage. My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health, introduced the Bill to improve food safety. We have calculated that, because of the increased powers that we are granting and because of the improvements that the Bill will make, there will be a requirement for additional resources. We have made the firm commitment of an additional £30 million, which will be taken into account in the rate support grant.

It is inappropriate for the hon. Gentleman to ask me at this stage—many months ahead of the calculations on the full extent of the £5 billion that will go to local government—how it will be allocated and what the allocations will be to individual councils. In preparing the Bill, it has been our duty to calculate the additional resources that will be required. In my opinion, we have done that job exceptionally well.

Although Opposition hon. Members may carp about it now, I was at the press conference when the Bill was launched and I saw the expressions on the faces of those who did not think that there would be any money for enforcement. I saw the look of pleasure when they heard about the £30 million that they had not expected. It is late in the day for Opposition Members to pick holes in it now. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has given a clear commitment about the £30 million and there is nothing that I can usefully add to what has been said.

10.11pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: It is the Minister's reply, but I shall call the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Martlew: The people who were at the press conference with the Minister must have been naive. This sort of thing has happened before in local authorities—it is called funny money. The Minister announces £30 million for health, and then says that he is allowing 5 per cent. for inflation—but inflation is running at 8 per cent. Surely there is a better way to allocate resources to local authorities.

There should be minimum standards, with the number of environmental health officers in local authorities set by the Government. There is another word for those people—the food police. Their job is to police standards in various authorities. We should have a system similar to that for the fire brigade, where the Government lay down minimum standards and the number of environmental health officers to be employed in each district. That must be carefully calculated, as in some districts, such as mine, although there are no major restaurants or cafes because it does not have a tourist industry like that in Blackpool, there are many food processing plants that need to be policed carefully. Therefore, my area should have a greater allocation than some of the suburban London areas, where there are many restaurants but not many food processing plants.

There are varying standards. Some authorities—mainly Conservative authorities—have only a few environmental health officers. Others, such as my authority in Carlisle, have high standards. It would be wrong for the Government to allocate more money to Conservative authorities—which, in the past, have neglected food safety and environmental health—at the expense of authorities that have taken an interest in health over the years.

I am deeply worried that, next year, we shall be listening to the Minister saying, "We gave the district health authorities and the county councils an extra £30 million and they did not spend it on that."

[Mr. Martlew]

First, by next year, there probably will not be the correct number of environmental health officers available. Secondly, as they have already this month, other Ministers will come to the Dispatch Box complaining about the level of the poll tax. There will always be a temptation not to spend the money on environmental health, but to use it to keep down the poll tax. The Government are always saying that local authorities are overspending.

I do not believe that the £30 million will be enough. There are not sufficient safeguards to ensure that it is spent on environmental health workers. The Bill will be a failure because there will not be the resources to implement it.

10.15 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): It is worth saying that the Minister's response was deeply inadequate and that should be on the record. I referred earlier to the difference between strawberry flavour and strawberry flavoured, and I said that there were strawberries only in the latter. This is calculation flavour rather than calculation flavoured. The Minister cannot explain how the Government came up with a figure of £30 million. I have no objection to guesstimates, but the Minister should say that it is a guesstimate rather than a calculation.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Food Safety Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(1) any remuneration or allowances payable to the chairmen of tribunals constituted in accordance with regulations made under the Act;

(2) any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown by virtue of the Act; and

(3) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.

FOOD SAFETY BILL *[Lords]*

WAYS AND MEANS

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Food Safety Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the imposition of charges in accordance with regulations made under the Act.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Resolved,

That during the proceedings on the Matter of Welsh Office Policies and Provision for 1992, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meeting of Standing Committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Liverpool (Open Space)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to place before Parliament today an important issue which affects my constituents and many other citizens in Liverpool—the future of the public open spaces and parks in my city. I also wish to take the opportunity to thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, for being in his place to answer my questions. In passing, I also thank him for our correspondence on this important issue in the past few months, and for the help and advice that he has given to people concerned about the future of our parkland.

I must say at the outset to hon. Members who are not familiar with Liverpool that there is a caricature of the city which gives a distorted impression of broken-down buildings, acres of dereliction and festering decay. No doubt, as in any urban area, there are such features, but a more balanced picture of the city emerges when visitors discover many of the fine buildings in Liverpool, and when they see Liverpool's rich heritage and, above all, the pride of parks bequeathed by our Victorian forebears.

Liverpool's parks and open spaces have traditionally provided a much needed lung for residents trapped in congested living conditions—people who may not have the advantage of a private garden. For other people, they provide a green wedge breaking the urban sprawl. For others still, the parks are a place to enjoy leisure time and recreation. The playing fields, especially, are much used by members of amateur and junior football teams.

King John gave Liverpool its charter. Since medieval times, there has been a park in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. The poet William Roscoe was a Member of Parliament for three months in 1807, before he was thrown out for voting against the slavery laws. He was an eminent member of the anti-slavery movement, which was a brave thing in Liverpool in those days. Roscoe wrote a number of poems describing the beauty of Liverpool and its parkland on the riverside in Toxteth.

That parkland was rapidly eroded in the 19th century expansion of the city, and it then became municipally owned and administered. Sefton park, in the heart of my constituency, is its last vestige. It and other parks and open spaces in my constituency, such as those at Calderstones and Otterspool, Wavertree playground and Wavertree park, along with other important sites such as Childwall woods in the neighbouring constituency are all now subject to planning developments which will destroy their character.

I am staggered that when we hear such a vast amount of rhetoric from politicians of all parties about our responsibility towards the environment, Liverpool civic leaders should have such scant regard for environment destruction which will assist only the speculator and the profiteer.

In the heart of my constituency, in the Aigburth area, it is proposed to rip up the central reservation of a beautiful suburban area and to put there instead a trunk road bringing yet more heavy vehicles into that part of Liverpool. Similarly, it is suggested that the M62

motorway should be extended into the heart of my constituency, destroying in its path the botanic gardens founded by William Roscoe, to whom I referred.

That follows on the back of the destruction of places such as the Harthill gardens in Calderstones, which were destroyed during the period when militant members of the city ran the council and, in a philistine way, destroyed a collection of orchids which was world famous, pulling down the greenhouses there merely because there had been an industrial dispute and the men who worked in those greenhouses had refused to join the picket lines. As a vindictive act, that parkland was destroyed.

Apart from actions of that kind and the road schemes, why is the city council so intent on so much development of the city's remaining parks and open spaces? At the end of the financial crisis in 1986, when those militant Labour councillors were disqualified from office, the city's leaders had borrowed £60 million from Swiss and Japanese bankers to finance their policies.

The city debt rose to a phenomenal £678 million. Their subsequent inability to meet debt repayments irresponsibly plunged the city into penury. By 1987, the debt was £715 million. By 1988, it was £738 million and by 1989 it was £758 million. This year it topped £774 million. The interest alone to service that debt is £80 million this year. The council has budgeted in 1990 only £10 million to meet those debt charges, so inevitably the crippling burden increases inexorably and grows like Topsy. By the end of this century, the city's debt could be a staggering £1 billion. Every time interest rates rise by just 1 per cent., it costs Liverpool ratepayers £420,000.

Having followed such a fiscally irresponsible approach, the council now says that it must sell assets to pay for its past mistakes—not just the family silver, but the table and chairs as well. For London property speculators, it is like the Klondyke rush as they queue at Euston to take the train north in the fond belief that there is gold in the playing fields and parks of Liverpool. Because the market has been flooded, assets are being sold dirt cheap, so in every respect the city's ratepayers lose.

Along with my city council colleagues Beatrice Fraenkel, Don McKittrick, Len Tyrer and Bert Heritty, I have been urging the council to think again, and I hope that the Minister will deal with several points today. Following the consultation paper which his Department issued on 7 February, which recognises the problems caused by the way in which local authorities seek to grant themselves permission to develop such sites, does he now agree with the view of the Royal Town Planning Institute that no application should be determined by the authority promoting the development? Does he agree also that there can be no question of fairness or objectivity if the council is both defence and prosecution, judge and jury, developer and the assessor? It is positively Kafkaesque to behave in that way.

The former president of the Royal Town Planning Institute, Chris Shepley, said:

"Green space is an essential component of the civilised city. Urban green space should be defended as vigorously as green belt, possibly by the introduction of a new category of protected land. The value of private open space as an amenity in visual and ecological terms should be recognised."

Those are the planning issues raised by such developments. Does the Minister agree that such applications should automatically be transferred to an independent inspector, perhaps appointed by the Secretary of State?

The Minister wrote to me on 5 March:

"On the planning issues my advice would be to continue to press the case with the City Council since the issues appear to be essentially local ones."

He will know from the correspondence with the Friends of Childwall Woods and Fields and from its chairman, Mr. E. Feeney, that, without guarantees buttressed by the Secretary of State, simple appeals to the magnanimity and decency of the local council will fall on deaf ears.

Mr. Feeney wrote:

"It does appear that the Minister has discretionary powers to 'call in' an application. It would we feel, be a great help to our cause and other causes if the Minister did intervene as we feel we have a good case and it would possibly deter the Council from contemplating further sales of open land. It is not just a local issue as the application would have implications for the whole city."

I concur with that. Is the Minister prepared to call in applications to develop the sites and guarantee that there will be public inquiries?

With regard to the Department's role in the proper use of Liverpool's open spaces, the Minister answered a question that I tabled on 5 March about the international garden festival site in south Liverpool. Some of that land falls in my constituency and I applaud the fact that the Government spent £10·6 million on a major land reclamation project which became the biggest tourist attraction in the country. It was a brilliant scheme and caught the imagination of millions of people in Britain, but it now costs £200,000 per year to maintain the site, the future of which has not been properly thought out. It would be a terrible tragedy if the site were allowed to revert to its previous dereliction and decay.

Why should we not have a royal park designated on that site similar to the royal parks in London which are maintained by the Department of the Environment? Such a designation would be an important step. It would take the park out of the local remit, which would be highly appropriate as it was developed by the Merseyside development corporation, established by the Department. It is even more appropriate when one remembers that Her Majesty the Queen opened the international garden festival. For many reasons, the site could provide local people and visitors to the city with a wonderful resource which can be guaranteed only if the Department of the Environment and the Minister intervene rather than leaving it to local circumstances.

These issues must be seen against a bleak national and international picture of environmental dereliction and decay: 97 per cent. of our British wildflower meadows have been destroyed; 190,000 miles of hedgerow—enough to encircle the earth seven times—have disappeared; three quarters of our internationally important heaths and more than half our unique peat bogs have been destroyed. No fewer than 22 different flowering species have already been lost and many more face extinction. On a global scale, 60,000 plant species have disappeared and one in four of the world's total could be extinct in our lifetime.

Having heard the ecological, fiscal and social arguments, I hope that the House and the Minister will feel compelled to act on the recommendations that I have made today and to ensure that the appropriate guarantees are given so that even more of our precious open space is not destroyed.

10.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I am most grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for bringing a number of important issues to the attention of the House. I know that they are matters of concern to him and his constituents. I praise him for so assiduously representing the views of his constituents on these matters, in writing to me and in parliamentary questions. I hope that I have been able to satisfy him on at least some of the points that he has raised in correspondence and that we shall be able to cover a number of new matters this evening as well as going over the ground in slightly more detail on some questions that have been brought to our attention as a result of the hon. Gentleman's inquisitive mind.

There are a number of important issues that I should like to set in context. I am a Minister with some responsibility for planning as well as for inner cities and for sport, all three of which are covered by the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised this evening, which are thus of considerable importance to me. It is vital that we safeguard recreational land in this country. Much recreational land, not least in our inner cities, is important, not just to the schools that it serves, where school playing fields are concerned, but in a wider sense to the community.

Between 1984 and 1994, nearly 1 million fewer children will be emerging from our schools than we have been used to. There are statutory obligations on schools and education authorities to provide playing fields and open space for those children as part of the educational process. We would be unwise to allow a rigorous correlation between the playing fields and the number of schoolchildren to lead to disposal of those playing fields, and then find, when the number of children starts to increase again, that we are not in a position to return what would then be built-up areas to recreational land.

For those reasons, I think that it is important that the Government should respond to many points that the hon. Gentleman has raised this evening, although I appreciate that they go wider than the educational issue. I am therefore pleased to announce that we shall be publishing a planning policy guidance note. It will cover a number of areas related to open space and playing fields to make sure that we protect them. I have considerable sympathy with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said, and I think it is timely for the Government to come forward with a paper for consultation. We expect that it will be ready within a matter of months—it is hoped, only one or two months rather than four or five. That will give an opportunity to the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members who are keenly concerned about the provision of open space, allotments and playing fields to comment in detail.

The hon. Gentleman raised a number of other important points, including the critical issue of call-in. As regards the discretionary powers available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to call in some of the cases which he has raised, the hon. Gentleman would not expect me on this occasion—nor would it be right, in view of the quasi-judicial position of the Secretary of State—to comment on a specific case. But in many cases throughout the country, call-in powers have been exercised by my right hon. Friend. It is important that, in areas of wider local significance, or infringement of the green belt, or, for example, where clear guidance is laid down in local or regional plans and it could be open to question whether the planning system is being followed, my right hon. Friend should have the power to call in and should exercise it in the types of case that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

The hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I am sure, since he is a very reasonable man, for not commenting specifically on some of the cases, because if I did so I would be prejudicing the quasi-judicial position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The hon. Gentleman raised a number of important issues about the garden festival site. The Department has just given clearance for the Merseyside development corporation to enter into negotiations with a company called Tomorrow's Leisure, and we expect to see the site developed and brought back into use shortly. Details are not available to me yet; they are subject to negotiations between the two parties. However, it is only reasonable given the right hon. Gentleman's concern on this issue and his interest in the subject, for me to draw to his attention details of the development and content of those negotiations as soon as they are available to me. That I undertake to do.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the designation of the site as a royal park. I can understand why he pushes so hard for this, and I hope that he will understand why such designation might not be appropriate. Royal parks are normally historical in nature and have a very important connection with the royal family. For that reason, it might be difficult, despite the connection that the hon. Gentleman has rightly made with the Queen's having opened the garden festival, to fulfil his wish that the site be designated a royal park as it does not satisfy the relevant criteria.

Mr. Alton: I touched on the length of time that there has been a royal park in this part of Liverpool. It goes right back to the founding of our charter and the time of King John. There was a royal hunting park in this part of Liverpool during the middle ages. I hope that the Minister will ponder on that when he considers these matters further.

Mr. Moynihan: There was much history in the hon. Gentleman's speech this evening on which I shall ponder, not least the history of some of our great poets and their association with the House, of which I was unaware until I was informed this evening. Additional historical evidence was brought to our attention, and I know, Mr. Speaker, that you would be especially interested in it.

These matters are worthy of further consideration in the specific context in which the hon. Gentleman has raised them. I give him an undertaking that I shall discuss with my officials the relevance of the historical evidence and whether it satisfies the criteria for designation. In my view, on the advice that I have been given to date, it does not. As the hon. Gentleman said, however, he has brought additional factors to the attention of the House that are worthy of detailed investigation. I shall take away his arguments, examine them in detail and respond to him in writing.

We are giving detailed consideration to the responses that are made to the consultation paper, and we shall respond in due course. I am only too well aware of Mr. Shepley's comments on green space and the green belt, and the Government are especially concerned to see the green belt protected and the value of green space respected. The

planning system is critical. That is why we need a comprehensive structure, first and foremost, of local plans, but that will be successful only if we have an effective framework of structure plans and regional guidance. I hope that that will reduce much of the onus that is placed on the inspectorate and will respond to the demands that are placed upon it, not least in the type of cases to which the hon. Gentleman has rightly referred this evening, which would place an onus on its work. I give the hon. Gentleman an undertaking that we shall be considering carefully the issues which he has raised in the context of the consultation paper, which I acknowledge are important.

Having made those rather lengthy remarks as an introduction, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to comment in greater detail on the matters which he has raised with me in correspondence and touched on again this evening.

In this area the Government can do little to intervene, whatever our personal feelings about the rights and wrongs of the case. Within certain statutory guidelines, local authorities are free to manage their own holdings of land and property in their own way. The statutory guidelines are relevant to the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman in a number of ways.

First, at the stage of disposal of land, there is a general requirement that the best possible price is obtained. There is also a separate requirement that is specific to land that is designated as public open space. I am certain that that is the designation of most, if not all, of the sites that the council is now considering for disposal. In these instances, the council must advertise locally its intention to sell for two consecutive weeks. It has to invite objections and other representations. Most importantly, it has to give genuine and serious consideration to any such representations that it receives.

At a later stage, when potential developers are seeking planning permission, a further set of obligations come into play. Where there are large developments to take place, the council must notify my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of any divergence from an adopted statutory development plan. If development of whatever size is proposed in a conservation area, the council must ensure that it is in line with conservation policies and of a sort that will enhance the character of the area. These requirements are additional to the generality of planning controls that also apply. They include, as the hon. Gentleman knows, all the normal mechanisms for appeal to my right hon. Friend.

As I understand the case that the hon. Gentleman has put, we are not now at the stage where any planning issues arise, though we may be in due course. On the issue of disposal of land, I am not aware of any suggestion that the statutory requirements that I have mentioned have not been complied with. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has himself consulted the district auditor on the issue and has been assured that there is no question about the legality of the disposals.

That is the formal position. By stating it, I do not mean to undervalue the hon. Gentleman's concern. The Government believe and have made it clear to local authorities on many occasions that the adequate provision of recreation opportunities is a vital part of the drive to regenerate our cities. In Liverpool, that belief has manifested itself in the support that we have given through the inner city partnership programme to a wide range of recreation-based projects.

The hon. Gentleman said that few hon. Members know the city, but I do and I share his concern about it. It would be of great benefit if more hon. Members had the opportunity to visit the city and get to know it. I worked for many years in Speke and it is always a pleasure to go back to see some of the developments that have taken place, but I share many of the concerns that the hon. Gentleman has voiced this evening about the council's lack of effective management.

I recently opened a new hockey centre at Wyncote and a couple of years ago I visited the athletics centre at Wavertree and the Peter Lloyd sports centre in Tuebrook, one of four purpose-built sports centres provided through the partnership programme. The Park road athletics centre has recently been upgraded. The derelict land grant has supported the creation of a cycleway on the line of a former railway round the city, and the Mersey coast footpath is nearing completion, thanks to the urban programme. Perhaps most spectacularly, two entirely new public parks have been created in Everton and Speke.

All that shows that, with the help of Government grants, facilities are being provided which range from opportunities to train to international standard in several sports on the one hand, to giving local residents somewhere to walk on the other. One effect of that, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge, is that there has been a considerable increase in the amount of public open space within the city boundaries, even before we take into account the Merseyside development corporation's garden festival site, the first in the country.

At the same time, an ambitious programme is under way, again with urban programme support, to improve the quality of existing provision. Liverpool has for many years had a range of public parks that should be the envy of the country. Many of them, sadly, have fallen into disrepair, —but that too must be and is beginning to be tackled. Studies are in hand to assess the cost of refurbishing the magnificent palm house in Sefton park, footpath improvements are under way in Calderstones and Allerton parks, and there are proposals to reconstruct the lake in Newsham park.

I understand that the current programme of disposals has its origin in a review of the city's recreational strategy that was undertaken in 1987, in part as a contribution to the process of formulating Merseyside's unitary development plan. The second major factor in the programme was a separate review, during 1989, of education provision across the city. That was undertaken in response to the fall in school rolls that has been, as the hon. Gentleman knows, a national phenomenon, made more severe in Liverpool because of the continuing decline in the city's overall population.

A number of school sites, including some playing fields, were identified as surplus to educational requirements. All such sites were then assessed within the context of the city's recreational strategy, and some were retained, while others were still considered to be surplus to requirements. I have already mentioned my concern about that direct correlation and the need for clear guidance, and it is important that that planning policy guidance note should be distributed widely for consultation and comment.

I think that the hon. Gentleman would agree with me that, in principle at least, the planning policy guidance note and the review process should be welcomed. Nor could I, in all conscience, condemn out of hand the

[Mr. Moynihan]

principle of making surplus assets available to the private sector for possible development, but we must ensure that they are surplus assets.

Those assets are there for people's use and we must maximise the involvement of the community in their use, making sure that we are responsive to community wishes for participation not just in sport but in other leisure and recreation activities as well. The presence of extensive park land is critical not only to the image of the city but to its regeneration and to the quality of life of the city's inhabitants.

I hope that the hon. Member will forgive me if I have not covered all the points that he has raised. Nevertheless, I trust that he will accept that I believe that one of the main purposes of Adjournment debates is to be a catalyst for further action and thought by Ministers in their responses to hon. Members who have taken the time and trouble to wait until the end of a busy day to express their anxieties.

I assure the hon. Member that I shall respond in full to any points that I have not had the opportunity to comment on, in addition to ensuring that he is properly briefed on the subjects I have mentioned, and I will ensure that the detail of his concerns is answered so that he may be able to add to the already rather lengthy correspondence in which we are engaged.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 9 March 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Hackney (Disturbances)

9.34 am

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that there were scenes of violence and looting last night in Hackney, which all of us in Hackney deplore. However, you will also be aware, Mr. Speaker, that Ministers have been making misleading statements about that outside the House. I should be grateful if you would advise me whether there is any means by which I may pursue this matter, either by an application under Standing Order No. 20 today, or by such an application on Monday.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any application from the leader of the Labour party to make a statement dissociating himself from the violence, because it is evident that many members of the Labour party were involved in the protest? Will the Opposition condemn the violence or sit silent? We want a statement from them.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) may not have been in the Chamber yesterday afternoon during Prime Minister's Question Time when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made it very clear that the Labour party totally dissociates itself from the violence.

Mr. Speaker: These are not points of order for me. I am sure that the whole House deplores what we have seen on our television screens and what has been reported in the press. I cannot advise the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on tactics, but if she would like to come to see me privately, I shall give her some guidance.

Orders of the Day

Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.36 am

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a great privilege to win a high place in the ballot for private Members' Bills. Indeed, this is the second time that I have had that privilege during my time in the House. It is important to choose an issue of general concern, on which action is needed and can be taken with reasonable speed, and on the importance of which the whole House is agreed.

I apologise for having a fairly lengthy speech, but I want to set the scene about acid house parties. The spread of such parties in this country over the past two years has revealed serious safety problems for those attending and performing at them. The problems that have arisen for the residents in the areas in which the parties have been held are equally serious. The licensing arrangements have been shown to be inadequate. I am therefore introducing this Bill to tackle the problems of the safety of young people attending the events and to protect nearby residents.

I make it clear at the outset that the Bill has a strictly defined purpose. It seeks to place in the hands of the courts the necessary powers to impose stiffer penalties on those convicted of holding and organising dancing and music entertainment without the appropriate local authority licence. The Bill creates no new criminal offence and it does not confer additional powers on the licensing authorities, the fire authorities or the police. It is designed specifically to deal with the problems that have been created by the spread of the so-called acid house parties in the past two years. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent young people from enjoying themselves at professionally organised parties, in a thoroughly safe environment.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): My hon. Friend seems to be making clear a difficulty that has been raised with me by a number of my constituents, especially young people who want to be reassured that while acid house parties, or parties of young people of all ages, are properly controlled and moved away from areas of heavy population, so that the general population is not disturbed, my hon. Friend is not seeking to ban such parties if they are properly run. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could make that clear.

Mr. Bright: If my hon. Friend listens carefully to what I have warned him will be a lengthy speech, he will hear that there is no way in which I am setting out to ban parties. I am simply seeking to ensure that they are licensed, legal and—more important—that they are safe. Once the Bill is enacted, that will certainly be much more likely.

Despite claims to the contrary in some sections of the media, safety considerations have been uppermost in my mind. Some of the media have been pandering merely to increase their circulation. I have here a photocopy of *Face*, which in my opinion has been irresponsible in not pointing out the safety dangers to young people.

[Mr. Bright]

The use of domestic and even commercial premises for noisy parties at which alcohol is consumed, music performed and dances take place has been going on for many years. The police and the local authorities, as well as environmental health officers, have the experience and a range of powers to deal with them. What is new and disturbing is the spread of pay-parties on a much larger scale. I understand that it began with the gatecrashers' ball in London in 1988. Subsequently it expanded so rapidly that the capital's clubs and night clubs were no longer willing to allow their premises to be used for the purpose. The potential profits from such parties prompted a search for other venues capable of holding audiences of several thousand. That was inevitably a magnet to unscrupulous operators and, indeed, criminal gangs.

Those who organise such parties, whether reputable individuals and companies or not, object to the term "acid house party". The term derives from Chicago slang describing the theft and subsequent mixing of recording tracks played at warehouse parties. But because of its association with drug LSD or "acid", the promoters prefer to use descriptions such as all-night party, warehouse party, dance party, rave and, I am sure, many other names. I know that one of my hon. Friends may introduce us to some of them later.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Would not a more apposite phrase for such parties be "pay-parties"? Substantial sums are charged to people, sometimes for parties that never happen.

Mr. Bright: My right hon. Friend is right. "Pay-parties" is another term that is used. People certainly pay. They pay dearly. He is right that sometimes people part with £30 and then there is no party. Certainly there has been one such case.

There is no doubt that organisers of such parties have been highly successful in attracting young people to various functions. It is also apparent that there is considerable organisation at many of the events. They have been advertised through expensively printed fliers or handbills. I have some here. They are colourful and, indeed, expensive. I am happy for my hon. Friends to look at them. The examples support the point that it is nothing for someone to spend £20,000 to launch a party.

Originally the fliers gave brief details of the date, time and approximate location of the party. Reputable ticket agencies such as Keith Prowse handled them. It is possible that they still do so. More recently, more sophisticated methods have been employed. The handbills and posters circulated give only telephone numbers to contact for information on the night about meeting points and ticket sale locations. Pirate radio stations operating on the FM band have been used for the same purpose.

The intended venue is announced at the meeting points when a sufficiently large number of young people have assembled. Sometimes more than one party is announced or the venue is altered on arrival at the first location. I have observed that process. Its sole purpose is to prevent the venues of the parties becoming known in advance to the local authorities, fire brigades and police, who are responsible for the safety of the young people attending the party. That was openly admitted by an organiser in the national press last June. He said:

"The venue for the party . . . was, like others of its kind, kept secret until the last moment . . . the main reason for the secrecy was to prevent the police from banning it."

The scene was set for a cat and mouse operation.

There is little doubt that the venues chosen are highly unsuitable. Parties have been held in disused or empty warehouses, farm outbuildings, on former airfields, in circus tents put up at short notice on waste ground and, on some occasions, in unoccupied homes. In almost every case the organisers have not sought a public entertainment licence from the local authority. As a result, proper safety standards for the performers and those attending have been completely disregarded.

There have been instances where doors have been locked, thus ensuring that people would be trapped inside in the event of an emergency, and of inflammable material being used without fire extinguishers or first-aid kits being available. At one pay-party planned at the Panasonic building in Thames valley, 20,000 ft of interior walls were removed by the organisers. Not surprisingly, the fire brigade intervened because the building was completely unsafe.

With thousands of people converging on the chosen location and when the party is under way, the regulation of noise levels, hours of performance, traffic and parking is impossible. The risk to which young people at such parties and nearby residents are exposed gives rise to great anxiety. I am sure that both Conservative and Opposition Members will wish to see those dangers eliminated.

Perhaps I may illustrate the risk to which the organisers expose their customers by citing three parties in Essex last autumn. At one, organised in a warehouse and attended by 3,000 people, the power generator did not work properly and the power cables on the floor produced sparks throughout the performance. At the second, held on a farm, the dance area was provided by crude scaffolding covered in plastic sheeting through which live cables passed. In a third case, a pay-party was held in a derelict private home heated by a liquid paraffin gas heater and powered by electricity which was bypassing the meter. The cables were wired through polythene sheets and were shorting out.

Jeremy Taylor, one of the organisers from Energy has told me of a party at which the scaffolding was alive with electricity. There is no doubt that when that happens, particularly when inflammable materials are also involved, there is a clear risk of fire. That disregard for public safety can also be seen in the lack of proper access and exit arrangements at many venues. On some occasions highways have been blocked and whole communities, such as villages or residential areas have been isolated. It is usual for party organisers strictly to control entry to their events, to make sure that they get their money. Even when they have access to ultra-modern premises—usually illegally—with proper industrial safety standards, doors are blocked. At one warehouse party, only two doors had not been blocked. It took the police over one and a half hours to let out those attending the party. If there had been an accident or fire, the consequences could have been disastrous.

The larger the party, the more serious the risk. That is especially so if the emergency services cannot gain access. It is common for convoys of cars and minibuses to be seen travelling to pay-parties in the late evening. One such party at Roydon airfield in Suffolk last September caused such disruption on the A12 that the road had to be closed. Last

Saturday the junction of the M25 and the A12 at Brentwood, which was the meeting point for several acid house parties, was completely blocked for some time. No one could get into or out of Brentwood. Certainly no ambulance or fire tender could have done so if an emergency had occurred.

Traffic problems on that scale naturally attract the attention of the police. But what is equally serious and dangerous is the sudden arrival of the cars and minibuses often in quiet residential areas and commercial districts. I hope that hon. Members on both sides understand that I am aiming at the safety and protection of young people.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) will forgive me if I quote what happened in Accrington last month when several thousand partygoers converged on a warehouse. Hundreds of fixed penalty parking tickets were issued and the police chased a large number of convoys through the streets. Both the local commander of police and the fire chief commented afterwards that because of the traffic it would have been impossible to reach the warehouse in the event of an accident.

It is not just the partygoer who is subject to these risks. Local residents endure disturbance and noise which can be intolerable. A party held last August beneath the flyover at the junction of the A12 and the A130 produced hundreds of complaints to the police and local authorities about noise levels. One held the subsequent month on the A130 at Benfleet provoked more than 1,000 complaints. Some of those complaints were from people up to 10 miles away. That illustrates the impact of these events. This nuisance is undoubtedly intolerable.

I have been told of a pay-party, which was fortunately prevented from starting, at which the level of amplification was to be so high that the honeycombed floor of the building, which was obviously wholly unsuitable, could have collapsed. If it had, we would have had a great many deaths on our hands.

The spread of these parties is of considerable concern to local authorities, emergency services and hon. Members, particularly those in whose constituencies they have taken place. The anxiety is prompted by a desire to ensure that large-scale parties should be held in appropriate and safe premises and that a proper balance should be struck between the interests of the partygoers and those of the local residents. No one wants to be a killjoy or a party-pooper. I certainly do not want to be branded as such.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): May I place on record that the last time I went to a party at my hon. Friend's house it was excellent? There were no signs of pooping there.

Mr. Bright: I cannot remember when that was. *[Interruption.]* I hasten to add that on that occasion the party finished by 7.30 pm. Moreover, when the party was running my hon. Friend consumed an adequate amount.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The hon. Gentleman referred to the term pay-party. Does he agree that because of the poll tax the Conservative party should be called the pay party? Perhaps it has been party-pooping, too.

Mr. Bright: I wondered when the hon. Gentleman would make a crack like that. Many young people have been complaining about the community charge, yet they are willing to pay £20 or £30 every week to go to these parties.

There is great anxiety in the House and outside about the criminal element that is clearly involved in the promotion and management of acid house parties. I do not wish to overemphasise this point, but it is apparent from all the anecdotal evidence, certainly from the Thames Television documentary, from court cases that have been decided and from newspapers, that pay parties often involve breaking the law. Why else would it be necessary to keep the venue a secret and to attempt to deceive the police? If the venues are safe and suitable, why are public entertainment licences not sought as a matter of course?

There have been too many cases of premises being broken into, for example at Accrington, and of keys being used improperly and duplicated for subsequent illegal entry, for the claims of these parties' supporters to be strict observers of the law to be convincing. I am aware of forged documentation being produced to support claims by organisers that they have the permission of landowners to use their grounds. At Polesworth in Staffordshire last September, for example, the owners were misinformed about the nature of the event for which the property was being hired. Why are the so-called security guards at these functions so often equipped with baseball bats, knives and, sometimes, even guns? I find it difficult to believe that the pit bull terriers that have started to appear are simply being given nocturnal exercise. Perhaps, too, the security guards who, according to *The Times* on 1 January, had CS gas canisters at a party in Reigate thought that it was some sort of superior air freshener.

The explanation lies in the massive profits that can be made at these parties which operate at the margins of the law and beyond.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend is talking about parties that happen at the margins of the law and beyond. Is he equally concerned about parties that are advertised but never happen? Is he aware that up to 4 March this year on 161 occasions in the Metropolitan police area, the south-east and in East Anglia, parties were advertised and tickets were sold, but the parties never happened? Young people were rippied off by substantial sums.

Mr. Bright: My right hon. Friend is right. He anticipates my speech because I was about to mention that the head of the regional intelligence unit said that in many cases the organisers are just "doing a runner" with the money. That means that they are taking the money from youngsters, pocketing it and disappearing rapidly into the sunset.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The House will have great sympathy with the Minister's comments. Will the hon. Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) address his remarks to the fact that his Bill will affect not only those parties, but perfectly legal, licensed, open-air, rock festivals? I am sure that that is not his intention, but he is well aware from representations that he has received that his Bill will inadvertently drive out of business exactly those legal, licensed, well-organised, open-air, music festivals. That would be destructive to everyone.

Mr. Bright: The hon. Gentleman, who has spoken to me, knows full well that I am worried about that point. I intend to say something about it later. However, I will take

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this opportunity to emphasise that the increased penalties are for those who do not obtain the necessary licence and for those who blatantly refuse to accept or who disregard the terms and conditions. I am worried that unscrupulous people could obtain a licence and wholly disregard the terms and conditions. We would then be back to square one. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall look into that.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Before my hon. Friend leaves this point, will he confirm that he is not proposing to alter the conditions of licences? If that is the case, why should people who obtain licences have anything to fear from increased penalties for breaking the law?

Mr. Bright: My hon. Friend is right. I am doing nothing to alter the law or the conditions under which people must apply for a licence. We are merely increasing the penalties. If people abide by those conditions and the law they have absolutely nothing to fear from the Bill.

Massive profits can be made at the parties and there are enormous opportunities for drug peddling. A small pay-party, catering for between 300 and 700 people, can often generate profits up to £10,000 for the organisers. A large party, catering for 10,000, can easily provide profits of between £150,000 and £200,000. I understand that since 11 November about 270 illegal parties have been held in the south-east, but, according to the regional intelligence unit head, in 144 of those parties the organisers were:

"just doing a runner with the money".

So, more than half those parties never took place. Young people parted with their money and some crook ran straight to the bank with it.

Apart from the profits to be made from selling tickets to the parties, profits can be derived from the sale of soft drinks. At one party 20,000 cans of Coke, that had passed their sale by date and had been bought for a few pence each, were sold for £2 a can.

The profits available from drugs are even greater and that is why the control of security arrangements at such parties often attracts criminal gangs. They can keep out competitors and control the distribution and sale of LSD, ecstasy and cocaine. The largest haul of amphetamine tablets found on one person by the police was recovered from someone who readily acts as the security chief at acid house parties. That says it all.

I understand from the police that every raid on an acid house party has found either individuals in possession of drugs or drugs discarded to avoid arrest. Takings of between £30,000 and £90,000 from drug sales at any one party are no exaggeration.

The chief investigations officer of the Customs and Excise, Mr. Douglas Tweddle, links the rise in amphetamine seizures directly to the spread of the acid house craze. It is nonsense to suggest, as the Freedom to Party Group has, that acid house parties will go underground and be taken over by criminals if the Bill becomes law. Organised crime is already deeply and directly involved in the pay-party cult and our young people are paying the price.

The police have rightly taken vigorous action to deal with the parties. They have the necessary powers to deal with criminal offences and under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 they are able to search premises and to detain persons. The Public Order Act 1986 gives police officers the authority to deal with the disorderly threatening and offensive behaviour.

The police also have powers under the common law to prevent potential breaches of the peace and public nuisances. The commission of acts not warranted by law, the failure to discharge legal duties, the endangering of the life, health, property, morals or comfort of the public or the obstruction of the public in the exercise or enjoyment of rights common to all Her Majesty's subjects fall within the law of public nuisance. Offences falling within that ambit are triable on indictment and can be punished upon conviction with sentences of up to five years' imprisonment. I understand that a number of charges of causing a public nuisance and conspiring to cause a public nuisance have been brought.

The operational difficulties faced by the police arise from the fact that the organisers of the parties deliberately flout the entertainment licensing requirements and the penalties available to the courts do not appear to be a sufficient deterrent. Considerable efforts have had to be put into the collection of intelligence information and the co-ordination of manpower and resources to deal with such parties. That involves the identification of potential sites, contacting the owners of premises or land who have often been misled about the true nature of the event to take place on their properties, liaison with the local authorities and fire brigade to arrange legal action, traffic control measures, and so on. In Essex alone, 90 police officers are on duty every weekend to carry out those duties. That is in addition to the necessary numbers of uniformed police officers who must be assembled to deal with a party once it has begun.

The consumption of police time, money and manpower is a heavy and unnecessary burden. As the weather improves, it is likely that further such demands will be made. More acid house parties mean more aggravation to local communities, and increased risk of a major accident to those attending—I hope that we shall never have to debate such an accident.

Action is necessary to safeguard the interests of local communities and genuine party goers. That action should be directed against those who organise illegal parties. I have looked carefully at the suggestions made by the Association of District Councils to amend the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to make the commission of a noise nuisance a criminal offence, to increase the penalties for convicted offenders and to make the seizure of equipment easier. I have also considered the ADC's ideas for the introduction of standard conditions for public entertainments along the lines of the model adopted by Tandridge district council in Surrey, for the creation of a stop procedure and the compulsory deposit of a bond before a licence is granted under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. I have also examined its proposals for the redefinition of a private party under the Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967.

The ADC's package is comprehensive and, undoubtedly, it would be extremely effective, but it constitutes a formidable agenda for action which I believe is way beyond the scope of a private Member's Bill. I prefer a more modest approach that will be equally effective, which is to increase the penalties available for offences against the entertainment licensing laws.

Before I explain the exact purpose of my Bill, I hope that the House will find it useful if I set out the nature and

purpose of the current entertainment licensing laws. The details of the law are complex, at least in England and Wales. To understand how my Bill will affect the penalties in each of the laws with which we are concerned it is helpful to understand the scope of the legislation.

In England and Wales, under the law on the licensing of public entertainments, whether an entertainment is public depends on whether, on the evidence, any member or members of the public could, on payment of an admission charge if one is required, attend the entertainment in question. I know that some of the more prominent organisers of acid house parties consider that they are private events that fall outside the scope of the public entertainment licensing laws. It is equally clear that the existing penalties are an inadequate deterrent. It is, therefore, appropriate to provide for increased penalties for offences as a means of bringing such parties under effective licensing control.

Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 or the London Government Act 1963 the responsibility for controlling places used for public music, dancing and similar entertainments rests with the local authority—the district council or the London borough council, as appropriate. Those provisions apply automatically to relevant events held indoors throughout the country. The 1963 Act also applies to those held out of doors in Greater London. The provisions covering such outdoor events are slightly different in that the licensing provisions in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act apply only where the local authority has taken the necessary steps to adopt them and then only where the events are held wholly or mainly in the open air on private land. Outdoor events on public land are subject to other forms of control.

Under the two Acts it is an offence to organise a public entertainment involving music and dancing, which is the essence of an acid house or pay-party, without a licence obtained in advance from the local authority.

Local authorities have wide discretion over whether to grant entertainment licences. They are also empowered by legislation to attach terms, conditions and restrictions to the licences that they issue. It is also an offence to breach any of the terms, conditions and restrictions attached to the licence. The licensing regime thus created meets a number of important purposes. It seeks to ensure that places used for such entertainments have adequate standards of safety in terms of fire and other hazards, such as excessive numbers of people in a confined space. It also aims to minimise and to regulate, as far as reasonably possible, any nuisance caused to the neighbourhood by the entertainment taking place. That can cover matters such as the provision of adequate car parking space to prevent or reduce congestion on nearby roads and, very importantly, the level of noise at the event, and for how long the event may go on. The last point is crucial. However unwelcome it may be to the immediate neighbourhood to have a noisy party going on, perhaps until midnight, the specification in a licence of such closing hours offers a reasonable balance between the interests of local residents and of those organising or attending the event. What is certainly unreasonable is to allow such parties to go on throughout the night and into the next day.

For those reasons, local authorities are rightly given wide powers to attach terms, conditions and restrictions when they issue a public entertainment licence. When they consider applications for licences, and the extent and nature of the terms, conditions and restrictions to be attached, local authorities take due account of any observations made to them by the police and the fire service, to whom advance notification of licence application must be made. Local authorities also give advance notice to members of the public around the event. When local authorities act as the licensing authority in this context—and I underline this point—they must act fairly and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

The legislation provides applicants for licences with appropriate avenues of appeal, and I underline that point. Many people are concerned that the genuine party may not be able to obtain a licence. I have already said that local authorities have to act fairly and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. People have the right of appeal first, to the magistrates court and, secondly, to the county court against a local authority's decision to refuse an application for a public entertainments licence. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) may care to listen to this. Current legislation gives people a similar right of appeal in respect of the terms, conditions and restrictions that a licensing authority places on a licence. Event organisers can appeal to the magistrates and to the county court. That is to ensure that silly and petty restrictions are not put on the licence. Licences must be fair and reasonable.

I have talked exclusively so far about the arrangements for the licensing of public entertainments in England and Wales. The Bill seeks to make changes in the penalties for offences in two other pieces of legislation. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 makes appropriate provision for the granting of public entertainment licences in Scotland by the district or island councils concerned. It also provides for the use of premises as a place of public entertainment without a licence to be a criminal offence. If a condition attached to a licence is not complied with, the holder of the licence commits an offence. Broadly speaking, that is similar to the public entertainment licence regime in England and Wales. So far, there have been only a handful of acid house parties in Scotland. If action is taken to control the abuses of such parties south of the border, but not in Scotland, the problem will simply migrate there. It is right in principle that the increases in penalties for which the Bill provides should apply to Scottish legislation to govern the licensing of public entertainments throughout the United Kingdom.

The law generally does not seek to control private music and dancing entertainments in the same way as it does public ones. However, there is an exception to that and in the light of the activities at acid house parties, it is important. The Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967 enables all local authorities in England and Wales to take powers to require the licensing of private events that involve music or dancing and which are promoted for gain on a broadly comparable basis to the licensing of public entertainments. Even if acid house parties are genuinely private events, provided that the local authority has adopted the 1967 Act, the organisers will need a licence if they put on the party for their private gain. It is important to understand that. For that reason, the Bill extends to the penalty provisions in the 1967 Act as well.

I have set out at some length how the existing entertainment licensing laws are framed. I now want to explain how they will be affected by the provisions of the Bill. The individual Acts are fairly complicated and, as a result, the Bill seems complex as well, although what it

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seeks to achieve can be expressed relatively simply. It provides for an increase in the maximum penalty that a magistrates court may impose on someone who has been convicted in a case where an entertainment involving music and dancing has taken place without a licence. The penalty will now be extended to a fine of up to £20,000 or six months' imprisonment, or both, on conviction for a breach of the terms, conditions or restrictions in the licence.

Clause 1 deals with the legislation that applies in England and Wales. Subsection (1) applies the new penalty to the relevant offence provisions under schedule 12 to the London Government Act 1963, which governs the licensing of public entertainments in Greater London. The current maximum penalty for the offence under that Act is a fine at level 5 on the standard scale, which is presently £2,000 or three months' imprisonment, or both. I have been careful to leave unchanged the penalties for offences under schedule 12 that relate to entertainments other than music and dancing, which are principally indoor sports events to which the public are invited as spectators and outdoor boxing and wrestling.

Clause 1(2) applies the new penalty to the relevant offences under the Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967. The present maximum penalty prescribed in that Act is a fine at level 4 of £1,000 or three months' imprisonment, or both. Subsection (3) applies the new penalty to the relevant offences under schedule 1 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 which concerns the licensing of public entertainments outside Greater London. Here the present maximum penalty is a level 5 fine of £2,000 alone. At present there is no power for magistrates to imprison those convicted of offences under the Act. As in the case of the London Government Act 1963, the 1982 Act also governs the licensing of indoor sports entertainments to which members of the public are invited as spectators. The penalty for offences at such public entertainments again remains unaltered.

Clause 2 deals with the position in Scotland and amends the provisions of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 by applying a new penalty for the offences of failing to have a public entertainment licence or failing to comply with any condition attached to such a licence. The present maximum penalties for those offences are fines at level 4 of £1,000 and at level 3 of £400 respectively.

I have explained what the Bill seeks to achieve and I must now make clear what it does not seek to do. Unfortunately, some misapprehensions have arisen before publication. The Bill creates no new criminal offence; nor does it give any additional powers to the licensing authorities, to the police or to the fire brigade. Furthermore, it imposes no new burden on the applicants for entertainment licences or on those who already hold such licences. The Bill is designed specifically to deal with the serious problem arising from the spread of acid house parties. The penalties provided in existing legislation are so small in relation to the huge profits that can be made that they cease to offer any real deterrent. The Bill will make the penalties for flouting the proper licensing requirements effective once more and will help to ensure that future operators act within the existing licensing framework.

I have spoken to a wide range of people inside and outside the pay-party business and to those who perform at these parties—the artists and disc jockeys. They have told me of threats they have received from criminals and drug pedlars. Adam Adamski, an artist who has appeared at many of these parties has stated in the most recent edition of *Melody Maker*—a journal which I commend for its fair view of what we are trying to do——

Mr. Norris: I take it every week.

Mr. Bright: Mr. Adamski says that he has been threatened on various occasions. So, too, have Jeremy Taylor of Energy, and Jonathan Moore of Coldcut. These professionals and other organisers in this world have refused to co-operate with criminals and drug dealers, and have had their premises, staff and functions attacked. Reputable people in the business tell me that they want the criminals out and the licensing procedures enforced.

I know that some of the larger companies in the entertainment industry are prepared to offer their facilities for parties, provided that they are licensed. These organisers, like others, recognise the need to meet the safety needs of the public and to stop criminal involvement in pay parties.

Of course, I am aware of one organisation—the Freedom to Party Group—which has resolutely opposed my Bill, although in an interview last night the group seems to have seen the light. The organisation claims to be the epitome of the enterprise culture: opposed to drugs, concerned about the noise and traffic problems created by its parties, scrupulous about informing local authorities about its plans and about having the venues for what it describes as private parties properly checked by environmental health officers and the fire brigade. The Freedom to Party Group is entitled to campaign for its views and advance its proposals; equally I am entitled to comment on them.

The group's claims are worth examining. It claimed in *The Independent* last Saturday that it had never broken any laws. I have with me a pamphlet produced by the group and published by World Wide Productions, which is very much involved in the campaign. The front page of the December issue describes how the Ealing district council applied for and won an injunction under the Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967 to stop an unlicensed and therefore illegal party being organised by this company. Its manager was also fined £1,500 for breaking a noise abatement order. North Norfolk district council secured an injunction to prevent a party planned for new year's eve, too. So it is clear that parties in breach of the law are being run by these people.

The group's claim to act strictly within the law does not square with the Freedom to Party Group's comment in the leaflet circulated to many of my hon. Friends that decoys, disinformation and deception have been standard practices. As a business man, I find that deeply repugnant. My business would be closed down overnight if I went in for those practices. It is not an excuse to argue, as the group does, that drugs are found just as often at conventional night clubs as at all-night raves. It was maintained in *The Independent* that most of the traffic problems associated with these parties would not occur if the police did not put up roadblocks on dubious legal grounds. That is the sort of logic that would bring even cloud cuckoo land into disrepute.

As for the much-vaunted claim of the organisers to consult local authorities and fire brigades on the safety of their chosen venues, I have learnt that that is often done on the afternoon before parties are due to take place, to prevent legal action being taken as far as possible. No fire certificate has ever, to my knowledge, been issued for such premises. The group phoned me yesterday and told me that I was wrong about this and that it was sending over, by bike, a copy of such a certificate. I am afraid that there was no such bike; I presume that the caller was on the usual acid house search, went to his rendezvous point and was sent elsewhere.

The Freedom to Party Group's positive proposals do not stand up to examination, either. In one breath it says that it recognises the problems that pay-parties cause, and organises them only well away from residential areas; and it calls in the next breath for night clubs to be allowed to remain open all night. Perhaps someone will explain to the group that we do not find night clubs on remote farms or moorland. The group blames police for causing traffic problems for which its parties are responsible and then asks to employ police to manage the crowds and control the vehicles that the parties attract. It asks at one and the same time for purpose-built temporary structures to be erected in remote countryside, and for more extended licences to be granted by local authorities on a regular basis. All the group's proposals are riven with contradictions.

Having fun and protecting the right of young people to enjoy themselves are not what the acid house party cult is all about. It is about making money and exploiting a lucrative market for as long as possible. The cult is about taking money on occasion without even providing a party, and about operating at or beyond the boundaries of the law. That is bad enough; but to endanger the safety of young people and of unfortunate nearby residents for the sake of one's bank balance is callous and evil. As Judge Rivlin pointed out when sentencing the organiser of three parties last year, they were "a purely commercial venture" in which the organiser was

"catering for large numbers of young persons who were minded to use dangerous drugs in a social setting."

That is true, and it is the worst possible example to set.

I am a keen supporter of small businesses and I have campaigned for many measures to help get people into business—particularly the enterprise allowance scheme—but I doubt whether the person from Stanford-le-Hope in Essex who applied for an enterprise allowance grant to run acid house parties from the headquarters of a greengrocer's shop fully understood the world in which he was trying to move.

I have set out the aims of my Bill as clearly as I can. I recognise that it may have wider effects than merely ending the threat posed by illegal pay-parties. In drafting the Bill I had to bear in mind the fact that if penalties remain the same, unscrupulous operators may apply for licences and disregard their conditions because profits are high enough to accept the fines as a form of business expense. That would not be desirable. However, I am more than prepared to listen carefully and to respond positively to suggestions from hon. Members on both sides of the House, provided that we can achieve the objectives that I have described. We shall have adequate opportunity in Committee, I believe, to do just that.

The Bill aims to ensure that our young people can go to parties to dance and enjoy music, confident that they are in a safe environment, without making the lives of nearby residents a misery and endangering their own lives. Stiffer penalties for those who are exploiting them are the readiest way of doing that. I commend the Bill to the House.

10.29 am

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on his good fortune in the ballot. I cannot welcome his Bill because, whatever its intentions, I believe that its effect will be to drive out legal promoters and legal parties and leave the field, ironically, to the criminal and cowboy elements. I suspect that that is precisely the opposite effect of what the hon. Gentleman intends, but I fear that it may be the result of his Bill.

The Bill has strange origins that go back to a written answer by the Home Secretary on 5 December in which he laid out much stiffer penalties for offences that he identified. That gives the Bill a strange and rather special status.

The House will have great sympathy with much of what the hon. Member for Luton, South said in his attempt to meet some of the problems of warehouse or pay-parties. These problems undoubtedly exist, but I do not think that they are present at every party of that nature. There is an organisation called the Association of Dance Party Promoters that attempts to self-regulate parties. It has been pretty successful in doing so but there have been problems and they continue to exist. I refer to problems of location, which the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has already identified, of fire, public protection, safety, electricity supply, relationship to the emergency services and first aid, traffic, structural safety and not least the cowboy promoters that the Minister has already mentioned in his brief intervention. These are all problems that are associated with unlicensed or illegal parties, and they are serious. The two deaths at Castle Donington in Leicestershire in 1988 showed how serious unlicensed and illegal parties or events can be.

The Bill seeks to address such problems with extremely serious and severe penalties—a maximum of £20,000, or six months' imprisonment. These are major penalties. Some would say that they would be draconian. I am sure that the hon. Member for Luton, South believes that that severity is merited by the problems that he is seeking to meet and that only that severity will be effective. The Bill, however, as the hon. Gentleman recognises himself, makes no distinction between legal and illegal parties, between unlicensed and licensed parties. They are all to be treated in the same way. The Bill will hit the licensed and the legal promoter of music events just as it will hit the unlicensed and illegal warehouse party promoter who is a cowboy. That might not be the hon. Gentleman's intention, but that undoubtedly would be the effect of his Bill.

When I intervened earlier, the response was that those who have licences and are legal and responsible promoters of concerts or parties have nothing to fear. Unfortunately, the world is not quite as simple as that. Large open-air rock music festivals will be hit. It is impossible to organise a large open-air event without some minor infringements by individuals who attend such events. It even happens at events such as Glyndebourne. The person who is responsible for the infringements is not the infringer but the promoter.

[Mr. Mark Fisher]

I shall give some examples that are related to the Glastonbury music festival, which takes place almost every year. It is organised by Mr. Michael Eavis. It has a high reputation for the enjoyment that it provides for about 60,000 people who attend. It has an enormously high reputation also in the rock music industry. The major record companies appreciate it and use it as a way of bringing new talent to the attention of the public. The festival's record is extremely good and it has the support of the local police. Every year the promoters obtain licences from the local authority and the magistrates.

With a festival of that size there are, of course, infringements. Last year Mr. Michael Eavis faced charges on 24 different counts. He pleaded not guilty to six of them, and he was found not guilty on each one. The cost of pleading not guilty is considerable in terms of legal fees and it was cheaper and easier for him to plead guilty to the other 18 counts and accept the fines as part of the cost of promoting the festival.

Mr. John Patten: I do not want to be unnecessarily combative because I know that the hon. Gentleman is trying to strike a balance between legitimate and illegitimate enjoyment. Is he saying, however, that the party promoter to whom he has referred was right to break the law?

Mr. Fisher: The Minister makes a good point. I am saying that the sort of infringements that I shall detail are committed by individuals who attend events such as the Glastonbury festival, not by promoters. I shall specify four of the infringements to which Mr. Eavis pleaded guilty and on which he was found guilty. I am asking the Minister to make a distinction between infringements by promoters and infringements by individuals or groups of individuals who attend events. In both instances it is the promoters who bear the fines.

Last year, Mr. Eavis was fined £2,000 on each of four counts, a total fine of £8,000. There were three offences of failing to ensure that individuals who went through the entrance gate wore wristbands. That is the system that is used to show that they have paid to enter. The fourth offence was one of exceeding the limit opposed by the licence on the number of people who could be admitted. The Minister will know that at other events, such as Hillsborough, much greater safety is to be obtained at an open-air site by allowing people through the entrance gate, if there is a great crush, than by excluding them. Exclusion leads to greater problems for the police and for public safety.

It is quite common for a rock music promoter to exceed the limit, and that should not be a cause of great concern. I am talking about a licensed promoter who chooses to exceed the limit on the ground of safety. It is impossible in practical terms to ensure that every one of 60,000 or 70,000 people who passes through the entrance to a festival, wears his or her wristband, but the promoter is liable to a maximum fine of £2,000 for every person found by the police not wearing one. That is the way in which the law works. The situation is rather more complicated than the Minister understands. I hope that he appreciates that there is a distinction between deliberate offences by the licensee who breaches his licence and actions committed by individuals who attend.

Mr. John Patten: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely. Would it not be better for the promoter to hold a smaller party or gathering over which he could have proper control?

Mr. Fisher: I do not think that anyone has complained about open-air festivals which cater for tens of thousands of people if they are properly controlled. There is no danger to people or to good order at such events, which obtain licences year after year and which take place with the co-operation of the police. There are, however, individual infringements.

The cumulative effect of the infringements last year at Glastonbury was that Mr. Eavis was fined £14,900. With an event of that size, those are costs which that promoter can bear as part of the wear and tear of running the event. Under the Bill, however, Mr. Eavis could be faced with fines totalling £140,000 and the risk of six months' imprisonment, which would make the situation impossible for him and for other promoters of rock music festivals. Similarly, it would be impossible for other people such as Mr. Harvey Goldsmith, the president of the Concert Promoters Association. The promoters have recognised this and have said clearly to the hon. Member for Luton, South and the Minister—they have made this clear in the press as well—that their legitimate businesses and activities would be put at such risk by the Bill that they would be driven out and prevented from continuing to hold events.

Mr. Norris: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the fines that are set out in the Bill are maxima? It is appropriate for magistrates to levy a lesser fine if they consider that a technical offence has been committed. Is not the hon. Gentleman missing the sad truth that in many instances the promoters of some of the events to which my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) referred—not of well known national events—treat the present inadequate fine levels as part of their running costs? They pay them, recognising that they will break the law before they start. That is a dangerous situation.

Mr. Fisher: As the hon. Gentleman says, that does not apply to promoters of legal and national events. The Bill will hit legal and national events—which everyone welcomes, enjoys and participates in—in exactly the same way as it will hit unlicensed and illegal events.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) said that it is up to the magistrates to decide whether to impose the maximum penalty, and that they will not do so for technical events. Frankly, many people feel that finding someone without a wristband at the Glastonbury festival is not a substantial infringement of the licence but a technical offence. However, at the moment magistrates are imposing the maximum penalty of £2,000 for people not wearing wristbands, although they are perfectly within their rights to impose a nominal fine of £100. There is a terrible risk for concert promoters that they will not be able to bear the costs if they are fined the maximum sum for technical offences—a fine which will increase, if the Bill is passed, to £2,000.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman mentioned Glastonbury. Can he say whether Mr. Eavis has had any previous convictions for the offences he has described? If there were previous convictions, it would not be inappropriate for the fines to be increased because the law

simply cannot be held in contempt. If it is a first offence and it is as trivial as the odd spectator not wearing a wristband, perhaps it should not attract the maximum fine, but to commit the offence time after time seems to me to be an entirely different matter.

Mr. Fisher: I understand that Mr. Eavis has a good relationship with the local police, which is why he gets a licence year after year, but every year he faces charges for technical infringements of the licence such as the ones I have described. The police do not object to granting his licence in subsequent years. There is a distinction between that sort of technical offence—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Epping Forest smiles, but the offences are the result of activities of people attending the events rather than the flagrant breaching of the licence agreement by the licensee. There is a difference. If Mr. Eavis was not behaving properly, he would not get the continued support of magistrates, the local authorities and the local constabulary. The hon. Member should make and accept that distinction.

I think that the hon. Member for Epping Forest has borne out the fact that, although the intention of the hon. Member for Luton, South may be to hit illegal cowboy promoters, he will also hit people such as Mr. Harvey Goldsmith, the Glastonbury festival and other major rock music festivals which are legal and proper and are held every year. The hon. Gentleman could solve that problem in Committee, and I hope that he will. He could table an amendment to make differential fines between licensed and unlicensed events.

Mr. Bright: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that I said that we would consider that issue in Committee. I am aware of the matters that he mentioned this morning, but I am sure that he will agree that our main concern must be to control illegal parties. If an illegal operator accepts a licence and then totally disregards the terms and conditions of that licence, we must have the power to deal with it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman accepts that powers given to the courts are to be used with the court's discretion. The fact that there is a maximum fine of £2,000 does not mean that the court will impose it. The public complain too often that magistrates never use the powers that we have given them.

Mr. Fisher: I appreciate that the Bill is intended to hit the illegal, unlicensed cowboy promoters, or those who give warehouse parties, but the hon. Gentleman must accept that that is not what the Bill does because it does not discriminate between illegal and legal promoters. The Bill may drive out legal party promoters or promoters of rock music events which, perversely, will open the field to the criminal, cowboy and illegal operators who will continue to act illegally as they have in the past despite the draconian fines. As the Minister said, there is a great deal of money at stake at these parties. Some illegal operators will not be deterred. I am sure that the hon. Member for Luton, South does not wish to wipe away all the legal promoters to leave the field free for the criminal element. None of us wants that.

I hope that the hon. Member for Luton, South will consider the issue in a wider context in Committee. He may be aware that last week the Health and Safety Executive, together with the local authorities enforcement liaison committee, started work on new guidance on safety at pop concerts and music events—what was known as the old Greater London council pop code. That has the support of the Home Office. Lord Ferrers gave it his support when it was announced and it had the support of Mr. Harvey Goldsmith, who is president of the Concert Promoters Association. I believe that it will provide a framework for future events, and the hon. Member for Luton, South and other hon. Members ought to take it into account in Committee.

One wider issue which we ought to consider is that, while the House obviously wishes to come down hard on and to solve the problem of criminal and cowboy promoters, we should ask why there is an audience for their work. Obviously some young people feel an element of excitement about impromptu, informal and illegal events, but I do not think that that is the only reason why there is a ready market for warehouse parties and pay-parties. We live in a puritan culture. There is not much of a youth culture in this country and the commercial outlets where young people can enjoy themselves in the evening often are extremely expensive and have licences which expire at an early hour—although pay parties are also expensive.

There is wider provision at, for example, the Leadmill arts centre in Sheffield, which has live music events at least once and sometimes several times a week, but it is the exception rather than the rule. If hon. Members consider the provision for young people to enjoy themselves, they will see that opportunities are more limited than they ought to be. On the whole, the House is male and middle-aged and does not have—[HON. MEMBERS: "Speak for yourself".] I do speak for myself, but when I look around the House I think I also speak for——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On behalf of myself and my hon. Friends, I resent the hon. Gentleman's comment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I think hon. Members will recall that I commented on this subject last Friday.

Mr. Fisher: I accept the criticism of the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) because I think that he can probably give us all about 15 to 20 years, but the rest of the hon. Members assembled here, and of hon. Members in general, are male and middle-aged. The House seldom debates events or activities that contribute to the enjoyment of young people. The Bill gives us an opportunity to do so, and it would be a great pity and a disservice if we came down hard on only some events dealt with by the Bill, and did not consider the reasons why there is a market for those parties. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's reasons——

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): No Conservative Member wishes to stop young people from enjoying themselves. We are concerned about the circumstances in which they are induced to enjoy themselves at illegal parties, and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) has said, they are often ripped off because the parties do not take place.

Mr. Fisher: I take the hon. Gentleman's point that the intention is not to stop young people from enjoying themselves. However, we should go wider than the scope of the Bill and look at a constructive policy involving local authorities to offer more legal and imaginative opportunities for young people to enjoy themselves.

[Mr. Fisher]

Live music is an important part of our culture. There are fewer opportunities to express or to enjoy it than there might be and I suspect that if there were more opportunities the market for illegal warehouse parties among young people would be considerably diminished, although it would not be eliminated.

I accept that hon. Members want to attack illegal parties, but the House must realise that the Bill, as drafted, will eliminate legal and constructive events such as the Glastonbury music festival. That cannot be the will of the House or the intention of the Bill. If the Bill is not amended in Committee, a high price will be paid for attacking the problem of illegal warehouse parties—in my view, far too high a price. It would be a tragedy if, in seeking to address one ill, the hon. Member for Luton, South created another by—ironically—leaving the field free to the very criminal cowboys who he seeks to eliminate.

10.49 am

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): Speaking as someone who is male and admits to being middle-aged. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Luton South (Mr. Bright) on using his success in the ballot to introduce such an important, timely and necessary Bill. I know from experience how much pressure is exerted on those who succeed in the ballot by organisations, groups and individuals, all of whom have their private schemes to put forward. It must have been very difficult for my hon. Friend to make his decision, but he chose well.

Representing an area that has been blighted by acid-house parties. I am increasingly concerned about the dangers and nuisance caused by them. I am well aware of the excellent work done by Chief Superintendent Robert Metcalf, commander of the Blackburn police division, despite the difficulties that he encounters in his efforts to deal with the problem. None of us wishes to be a killjoy or to curtail personal freedom, but members of the public must be able to enjoy themselves in the knowledge that they are not in danger. Sadly and worringly, that is not the case at present: it is only a matter of time before a major disaster occurs, with a horrendous loss of young lives. Then the public will ask, "Why didn't someone do something?"

Acid house parties are now a common occurrence throughout the country, but there seems to be a particular problem in north-east Lancashire, where such parties are placing a considerable burden on police resources. Every weekend some part of the area is the venue for such a party. On 17 February, 5,000 people from the north-west, the midlands and Scotland attended an all-night party in a warehouse in Fairfield, Street, Accrington. They caused £50,000 worth of damage to the offices of Hyrota, the Hyndburn and Rossendale training agency, smashing up furniture, stealing telephones and video equipment and ripping radiators off walls.

The warehouse is owned by Supetrac, a company which employs only 10 people and is the subject of a current early-day motion congratulating it on winning an export order worth £100,000 from Burma. The company tells me that the party cost it nearly £5,000 in damage and stolen goods. The police were inundated with telephone calls from irate and often frightened local residents when more than 1,000 vehicles were parked in the streets and side streets surrounding the warehouse, but their efforts to stop the party were thwarted by the sheer numbers attending. It seemed that the positon could not get any worse, but a week later it did. Some 10,000 partygoers—again, from all over the country—converged on a warehouse in Nelson at 1 am on Sunday. Police with riot shields were attacked as they raided the party in an attempt to prevent possible tragedies. At both the Nelson and the Accrington parties, there were arrests for drug-related offences.

It may well be fair to say that the vast majority of those who attend such parties are well behaved, wanting nothing more than a good time staying out all night and dancing to music that is probably harmless, although it seems strange to the rest of us. Nevertheless—even if we put aside the damage that is done, the drugs that are available, the traffic offences that are committed and the fact that young people are ripped off when they buy tickets for parties that do not take place—we cannot fail to act when organisers are putting at risk each week not only the lives of thousands of young people, but those of local residents. No ambulance or fire appliance could get near any house in the area should an emergency occur.

The misuse of warehouses and similar premises creates potential deathtraps. The 5,000 people at the warehouse party in Accrington entered and left by one door. Accrington's fire chief, Station Commander Colin Cuncliffe, said that the party was a receipe for disaster, and could have turned out to be Hillsborough and Bradford rolled into one. In an interview with a local newspaper, he said:

> "It was a cause for grave concern and could have had tragic consequences for both party goers and nearby residents. We couldn't have got an appliance within half a mile of the warehouse because of parked cars. The party breached all planning regulations on fire exits, emergency lighting and fire resistance of materials. There was also the danger of inflammable substances stored in warehouses which would never be allowed near a club. Al these add up to a cocktail for disaster."

It is clear to me that it is only a matter of time before someone dies—and, regrettably, it will be not just one person but many. Although the police know where the parties will be held, they do not know the exact location until the last minute, and thus do not have time to react quickly enough to stop them going ahead. Once a party starts, the police have a problem: if they go in, given the crush, they may cause an incident or panic that could lead to hundreds of deaths.

I find it hard to understand why those who attend such parties cannot see the danger into which they are putting themselves. I find it equally difficult to comprehend how parents can write to local newspapers defending the parties, and suggesting that the organisers are providing some sort of service that livens up the area. The fact is that the organisers are making huge profits. With entrance fees plus the sale of cans of drinks at £1 a time, £20,000 can be made in one evening. I am not against anyone making a profit, but I am against those who do so by putting lives at risk and causing criminal damage. The maximum fine of £2,000 for not having a music and dancing licence is clearly inadequate: organisers know that they can afford to ignore the law.

The new penalties proposed in the Bill would go some way towards deterring some organisers, but I do not think that they would be sufficient to deter the organisers of parties on the scale that we have seen in east Lancashire.

Even if the maximum fine of £20,000 were imposed, it would represent just one night's profit at the current rate of admission, and I see no reason to doubt that partygoers would be prepared to pay more. Given that many travel hundreds of miles to attend, money is clearly not a problem. If the admission charge were doubled the week after the organisers were fined, attendance would not diminish and the organisers, even after paying the fine, would probably have made a profit.

The Bill should be strengthened. A fine of £20,000 or six months' imprisonment may be enough when we are dealing with unlicensed entertainments that simply cause a nuisance, but, in the case of unlicensed entertainments that not only cause a nuisance but endanger the lives of those attending and those living nearby, a more appropriate penalty would be a fine of £50,000 plus six months' imprisonment.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South said, the larger the party the larger the risk. The larger the risk, therefore, the larger should be the penalties. A recent editorial in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* commented:

"Enough is enough. The Acid House anarchy has to stop. This newspaper in common with every decent law abiding citizen in East Lancashire is sick and tired of the criminal abuse taking place every weekend in the name of 'fun'. The Acid House criminals are laughing at the law. They know they can get away with it. That's got to stop."

The newspaper's view is echoed by the majority of my constituents, and I am grateful to Hyndburn borough council for its efforts to lobby support for the Bill. Hon. Members will all have received a letter from the council's chief executive, Mr. Michael Wedgeworth, suggesting that, in the view of the six local authorities in east Lancashire and of Lancashire county council, as police and fire authority, the Bill needs to go much further if the problem is to be reduced to manageable proportions. The authorities suggest that there should be clarification—that the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 relating to the licensing of public entertainment under schedule 1 clearly encompasses quasi-private events.

In the penultimate paragraph of the letter it is also suggested

"That failure to obtain a public entertainments licence should be an offence triable either summarily or on indictment, according to the circumstances and with a maximum 5 year custodial sentence . . . It should be stressed that the maximum penalty may deter but more significantly, would give the Police the powers required to intervene at an early stage and prevent the occurrence of the large scale party. A six months' prison sentence as proposed by Mr. Bright's bill would not provide the Police with the powers of entry, as of right. Currently, a Warrant has to be sought from a Magistrate once the event has started—crucial delay could cost lives. Power to enter unlicensed premises is felt to be absolutely necessary. Power to seize equipment would be very helpful."

The matter is urgent. I hope that the Bill will be given a Second Reading, that it will be strengthened in Committee and become law quickly. If we fail to act quickly, we shall have to bear some responsibility for the deaths that inevitably will occur.

11 am

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) for having had the foresight to introduce the Bill. By doing so, he has done us all a great service. I am happy to be a co-sponsor.

As my favourite champagne Socialist and Old Etonian, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), described me so accurately—middle aged, male and a paid-up member of that particular tendency—we have to ask ourselves whether we are being dreadful killjoys and whether there is nothing wrong with all this: boys will be boys, kids will be kids and intend to have a good time, so are we being unnecessarily repressive and can we not allow them to enjoy themselves? The hon. Gentleman suggested that vague illegality is quite a thrill at a certain age and almost inevitably happens at some point in everyone's life, so are we not in danger of over reacting terribly?

A subtle campaign for that point of view has been mounted by the profiteers. Some of those who belong to the freedom for parties movement, or whatever it is called, have perfectly good intentions and are in no way associated with criminals. I believe that they have been persuaded to regard this as a great liberatarian issue. However, that is an appalling sham. Anybody who has suffered from these parties, as some of my constituents have had the misfortune to do, believes that we simply cannot leave the law as it is and that Parliament has a responsibility to do something about it. The Bill enables us to do something.

We cannot ignore the safety problem, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) referred. Much of the high-powered sound amplification equipment that is used is dangerous because of the amount of electrical insulation that is required and the sophistication of its installation. There have been instances in Essex of cables that were not enclosed sparking during performances. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to work out that that could lead to a conflagration, and if that happened in a dilapidated building with inadequate exits and scaffolding that had been erected in an amateurish fashion—which itself is a hazard on a number of grounds—there could be appalling carnage.

It must be obvious to those who, for whatever reasons, oppose the Bill, as well as to those who wholeheartedly support it, that Parliament, the Government and local authorities would be called to account by the press. We should be to blame. If the Opposition do not understand what a heavy responsibility Parliament has, I am genuinely sorry. On safety grounds alone there is a case for examining whether the existing law is strong enough. For reasons I shall explain later, I do not believe that it is.

If we ignore the safety implications, we shall do a great disservice, particularly to the many young people who go to these parties. They are not necessarily aware of the critical nature of some of the electrical insulation and installation, or of the dangers of inadequate scaffolding, poor exits and overcrowding. At the age of 14 or 15, they cannot be expected to understand all that, any more than those poor souls who were caught at Hillsborough understood the nature of the facilities that were available at that ground; they suffered and died as a consequence of the failure of others to take adequate safety precautions. If we passed over that question without dealing with it, Parliament would be failing in its responsibility.

Mr. Fisher: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that legal and licensed promoters such as Mr. Goldsmith and Mr. Eavis have never received complaints about safety at their

[Mr. Fisher]

events? For that reason, will he join me in seeking to distinguish between legal and licensed events and illegal and unlicensed events?

Mr. Norris: I would make a distinction between Mr. Eavis and Mr. Goldsmith. It would be wrong to put them in the same category. The experience at Glastonbury was quite different from the experience of those who attended Mr. Goldsmith's concerts. I have attended a few of them. They were large events for which specially constructed scaffolding was put in place. Mercifully, those events were without incident, largely because a reasonably mature and sensible audience quietly watched lavish performances that were subjected to all the normal safeguards. The hon. Gentleman does this place no credit by associating an affair such as Glastonbury, whatever its merits or demerits, with the opera productions for which Mr. Goldsmith is famous.

Mr. Fisher: I associated the two gentlemen because both are members of the Concert Promoters Association. All members of that association are extremely concerned about the failure of the Bill to distinguish between legal and illegal events.

Mr. Norris: I believe that the Bill has two purposes, as does the existing legislation. I say again that—as my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) pointed out in an intervention—we are not taking new powers; we are talking about new fine levels. The distinction is clear. A person who obtains a licence has to abide by its conditions. If he or she does not abide by the conditions, an offence is committed. If either of the gentlemen mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) commits an offence, having obtained a licence, no doubt the due process of law will be pursued.

I am more concerned about those who do not bother to obtain a licence because they treat the subsequent fine as part of the costs of the evening. We ought to consider what happens in practice. Even among those who obtain licences—for example, the organiser of the Glastonbury event—there are different attitudes. Therefore, different consequences ensue. Until I became the Member for Epping Forest, in which constituency I now live, I lived in Wiltshire, a couple of miles away from Stonehenge and not many miles from Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury event is permitted because of the huge number of people who turn up at Stonehenge. We have seen the violence that has occurred over the years when the police have tried to move people on. The purpose of today's debate is not to discuss whether the police were right to move them on, but when the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central says that the promoters are given a licence each year because the magistrates think that they are such jolly good people who organise such responsible parties, he may be missing some of the subtleties of the permission which relate to the considerable public order difficulties that might ensue if the people who had been to Stonehenge turned up at Glastonbury in a mood to dispute the magistrates' decision. Safety is immensely important and we cannot ignore it.

There is also the problem of noise. The most recent acid house party in my constituency was held in a perfectly normal residential street. There was nothing remarkable about it except that it contained an unoccupied house which was suddenly filled with hundreds of young people. There were not thousands of them, but no more could have been accommodated in that house although they broke down the doors and spilled over into the garden. The party took place one night without notice and the noise was so appalling that several of the residents who complained had to leave their homes. They had to ring friends or relatives and say, "Can I please come and stay with you as this is just unbearable? We cannot stay here." They had to leave because of the noise and the criminal damage and intimidation that occurred outside the party.

All hon. Members will accept that noise is a problem that is not created only by acid-house parties or large parties generally. It also derives from unneighbourliness particularly in flats, where people suffer very badly. Some of the most trying cases are brought to my constituency surgery by people who complain about bad neighbourliness, particularly noise pollution. At the moment very little can be done, so I welcome the fact that the Department of the Environment is looking at the application of section 58 of the Control of Pollution Act.

There seems to be some scope to find out whether new powers are necessary to deal with a serious problem and irritation. The right to have a great time and to play music much louder than old middle-aged fuddy duddies such as I might enjoy—and that is pretty loud as I am also becoming deaf—must be balanced by an equal right of peaceful enjoyment. It does not seem unreasonable that people should be able to enjoy themselves without making the lives of their neighbours a misery. That is a real issue which any responsible legislature should seek to address.

I mentioned criminal damage. The parties in Essex have produced intimidation and criminal damage to people's cars that are parked nearby and to property, front gardens and outbuildings of neighbouring properties. All that is regrettable and clearly stems from the parties. When neighbours in the vicinity of the most recent party in my constituency had the temerity to remonstrate with the organisers and ask them to turn the music down, they were subjected to considerable intimidation, not by the organisers, but perhaps by those who attended the party. It was a pretty hostile and unpleasant environment for the people living nearby. We have a strong duty to consider their rights as well as the rights of free enjoyment of those who attend the parties.

At least as important as the safety aspect is the relationship between the parties and drugs. There is no question but that drugs are distributed fairly liberally at many such events and many convictions have been obtained in connection with the parties. It is not hyperbole or invention, it is a fact. There is equal evidence that the drugs are guarded by young men armed with everything from CS gas, as my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South mentioned, to firearms and baseball bats. That creates a hostile and dangerous atmosphere. It also carries the prospect of irreparable damage being done to the young people who have the misfortune to become involved in the drug scene at such events.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has been here throughout the debate and has already participated in it. I know that he is desperately concerned about the potential spread of crack. He knows that one of the dangers of crack is that it is so appealing. It can be made extremely cheaply and it is easy to distribute and consume. It would be a black day if that drug were to spread in Britain with the consequences that

we have seen in America. There is already a significant danger that that will happen for reasons unassociated with acid house parties, but they will not help in the battle if they are at locations where those substances can be peddled all too easily.

The chief constable in Essex operates an extremely effective and efficient constabulary. The people of Essex have every reason to be proud of the service it offers. However, that service is hard pressed, as bids to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for additional police manpower demonstrate. In that context it seems an absolute tragedy that police resources should be employed in patrolling and visiting acid house parties when quite clearly they should be deployed on real, serious issues of public order that arise in any community without the artificial stimulus to illegal activity that those parties warrant. They are not adequately policed. The role of security guards was rightly shot out of the air by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South. He is right to say that they are not genuine security guards; they are there to guard the proceeds of trafficking or the takings about which the Inland Revenue might hear slightly less than the bank manager. That means that a substantial police presence is necessary, and that police pressure is a diversion of resouces that should be devoted elsewhere.

Everyone who considers the issue is struck by the fact that in many cases technical powers already exist. I am delighted that my hon. Friend, in seeking the best method to obtain the desired results in the circumstances, avoided a great panoply of new powers. He is absolutely right. It is important to stress as often as possible that no new powers are sought. It is also important to satisfy those who are concerned about the matter that adequate powers of control and licensing are available. However, at present there is no adequate system of hitting the profiteers where it hurts—in the pocket.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and I were discussing the matter outside the Chamber—I know that it is a matter of great concern to him, and I hope to hear him address the House in due course—and we realise that the deal is put together by a group of people who do not care how they make their profit and see it as a wonderfully lucrative way to make a lot of money in cash. There are many advantages of cash. I imagine that no receipts are given and I doubt whether the Customs and Excise officers see much of the proceeds of acid house parties or that every ticket is registered for VAT. When those profits are generated the costs associated are not very large in relation to the gross. At the moment one of those costs may be a fine of £1,000 or £2,000. That is a derisory figure in the context of an income of anything from £10,000 to £100,000 or £150,000, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South has talked. It is literally treated as an above-the-line item, like rain insurance to a more respectable event organiser. It is just ignored.

The great flaw in the present legislation is not that there are no powers to fine but that the fines are derisory. Organisers laugh, pay the fine, smiling, and walk away secure in the knowledge that if they subsequently offend, the maximum fine will still remain at those low levels of £1,000 or £2,000.

We must always be careful about fines and ensure that they are appropriate. I welcome the Minister's recent comments about the possibility of linking fines on many issues more directly to people's ability to pay. If that principle is generally commending itself—I believe that it will find general commendation on both sides of the House—surely the idea of hitting people in the pocket should apply to this sort of activity which is quite nakedly about making a fast buck and doing so because the penalties for breaking the law are derisory.

In most cases, £20,000 fines will be adequate. I welcome the fact that prison is offered as an alternative because if even £20,000 were not enough—clearly, there may be a number of counts on which an organiser could be charged—and, in the magistrates' view a great deal more money is being made, it would be entirely appropriate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn suggested, for imprisonment to be used.

If we consider why prison would be appropriate we can think of the appalling safety issues. It was bad enough at Hillsborough and those cases in which genuine mistakes were made. How much worse it would be if there had been such a cynical disregard for elementary procedures to ensure that events were safe. We can think of the implications of exposure to drugs and the effect on neighbours. It then becomes clear that it is entirely appropriate to take these steps.

It is unfortunate that the Labour spokesman on the arts, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, should oppose the Bill. I do not believe that that is the general view of the vast majority of people who might be tempted to vote for his party. The overwhelming number of people in this country will wish us to do something about the problem, as the Bill now seeks to do. The penalties are appropriate and I commend the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South. I hope that the Bill will have a speedy passage through Committee and get on to the statute book quickly enough to enable us to do something once and for all about this appalling blight.

11.23 am

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Like many other hon. Members, I congratulate the hon. Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on his initiative in ensuring that the Bill came before the House today. Essentially, it substantially increases the penalties on those who promote illegal and unlicensed acid house parties, as well as those who promote legal and licensed events.

In broad terms, acid house parties can be illegal in two ways. First, the event may proceed without the promoter obtaining an entertainments licence from the local authorities. Secondly, sometimes promoters fail to enforce the licence's conditions as agreed between him and the local authority. That means that if a promoter fails to keep noise levels down to the agreed levels or to have adequate crowd control, hygienic or fire arrangements, it can result in a violation of the licence.

It is important to realise that the licensing of such events exists to ensure the safety of those who attend them in such large numbers. Local authority licensing should also aim to protect the interests of the residents who live in the vicinity of the events, which are not only attended by large numbers but can go on for several days. Often, once the event is over, many people remain on the site, camped in fields and so on.

Huge events can be a menace to local communities if they are not properly and efficiently organised. There have been cases of severe damage to homes and properties, noise nuisance, terrific traffic problems and bad behaviour, often resulting from alcohol and drugs. Those attending

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

often move on leaving all their garbage and filth for others to clear up. The impact on communities is sometimes nothing short of disaster.

Such behaviour is not only unacceptable but unfair to local people who have to put up with it. I want to make it absolutely clear to the House that the Labour party believes that tough action must be taken against those who organise illegal acid house parties.

Mr. John Patten: Does not what the hon. Gentleman has just said directly contradict some of the themes developed by the Labour party's arts spokesman, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher)?

Mr. Randall: No. I have not yet developed my case. What I and my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central said was that we are opposed to illegal acid house events. He went on to say—a point that I shall develop—that we are concerned about some of the side effects of the Bill on the legitimate, decent, traditional promoter of events. Therefore, there is no inconsistency in our arguments.

We support the part of the Bill that advocates substantial increases in penalties for such illegal events. However, it would be a serious error if the Bill, in attempting to tackle the problems of illegal acid house parties, created unnecessary business risks for the genuine and acceptable promoters and resulted in the loss of venues for traditional festivals. That would have serious cultural consequences and would be a bad side effect of the Bill.

What about the views of the entertainments industry? The House should note the views of certain genuine promoters, and I shall refer to a letter which I have received from Mr. Harvey Goldsmith, the president of the Concert Promoters Association. The letter states:

"The CPA is concerned that these unscrupulous promoters"

—the people who operate illegal acid house parties—

"are allowed to run unlicensed events. We are concerned about security and health aspects and or drug abuse. We do not want these"

—the printing is not very good here—

"illegal events to take place and we certainly do not want to be tarnished by them. We believe that Mr. Bright's proposals for increasing the penalties for these unlicensed events are correct and will give our wholehearted support to these recommendations. However, we believe that Mr. Bright is taking his recommendations too far."

Opposition Members support that. Later in the letter Mr. Goldsmith refers to acid house parties, stating:

"These are in the main unlicensed renegade events organised by non-professional promoters. The concern is:

1. Often the organisers and their responsibilities are unknown.

2. Large amounts of profit are made without reference to security, toilet provisions, general safety of the audience.

3. There has been considerable peddling of drugs at these events.

4. There has been violence at the events by unscrupulous security guards hired to protect the promoters.

The attraction for the public at these events is that they are seen 'to be the place to go' and because the public know that they are so called 'street events' and obviously anti-establishment. The public that go to these events are quite young and they themselves rarely cause any problems."

Mr. Goldsmith goes on to talk about some of the ways in which the promoters might encounter difficulties from council officers who might be antagonistic towards certain events and exploit their powers. He states:

"Currently there is a satisfactory element of flexibility with most councils and officers in dealing with numerous problems which may or may not occur during the event. Often it is beyond everybodys control if an abuse of the licence takes place. For example the noise level may go over the agreed limit because the prevailing winds require the sound engineer to increase the volume. Sometimes; portable toilets do not work as efficiently as they should. On occasions concerts over run because it has been felt that, in the interest of good order, this should happen. Under the proposed new amendments an unfriendly officer could cause severe penalties to be imposed where as at the moment one would 'talk out' the problem.

I fail totally to understand Mr. Bright's and the Home Office's logic and their intentions. The faster the unlicensed unauthorised events are irradicated the better for all of us. Why not at least get that element through Parliament and wait for the new pop code to come out before looking at trying to stop professional promoters from doing their business."

That is the industry's view. The Concert Promoters Association feels considerable concern about the way in which the Bill increases penalties for licensed events, bearing in mind that such promoters have had such a good track record so far.

Mr. Bright: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the imposed conditions and recommendations advanced by the Health and Safety Executive could be much more stringent than any of my proposals? If the operators break those regulations, which I understand will relate to safety and to protecting the health of both the staff and the people who attend those events, the fines are limitless. Fines resulting from prosecutions brought by the Health and Safety Executive have been as high as £500,000 and the terms of imprisonment also are limitless. Surely the hon. Gentleman agrees that my proposed fine of £20,000 is just a drop in the ocean compared with what the Health and Safety Executive would do if people contravened its terms and conditions.

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman is way outside the scope of his own Bill. At the moment a code of practice is being drawn up under the umbrella of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. We do not know what will come out of that, but today we are debating whether we should substantially increase the fines for both licensed and unlicensed operators. The hon. Gentleman cannot argue that the penalties in his Bill are satisfactory because in the future it is possible, though not certain, that the health and safety at work legalisation will grant certain powers to local authorities which would include stringent penalties. We cannot pursue the hon. Gentleman's logic at this stage because the code of practice has not yet been drawn up.

As I have said, there is concern in the industry. Genuine promoters feel that the Bill is out of balance, too heavy-handed and will have undesirable side effects. Although the Labour party is opposed to illegal acid house parties, we believe in principle that people should be free to attend events and festivals of their choice and to enjoy themselves. However, that is conditional upon such events being conducted within the framework of the law. They must be legal. I agree with the hon. Member for Luton, South that there is a balance to be struck between

protecting the freedom of individuals to enjoy themselves in that way and safeguarding the interests of the community in which such events take place.

In principle, I feel that the system of licensing via the local authorities provides a reasonable way of striking that balance of interests. The mechanism already exists. If it is not being used properly or as effectively as it might, that responsibility must rest with the local authorities. They must reconsider their codes so that they meet the needs and aspirations of their own communities. After all, they can put what they like into their codes; it is entirely up to them.

Mr. Ian Taylor: There is an important issue here. Most acid house parties are designed deliberately to ensure that the local authority does not have any time in which to apply any of its powers under the licensing arrangements. People arrive on site at about the time that the local authority becomes aware of the event. It then becomes a question not only of whether there should be an injunction, but of whether there may be public disorder.

Mr. Randall: Yes, and that is illegal behaviour. Therefore, we support heavy fines and an increase in the fines allowed by that mechanism. There is no dispute about that.

Although I may be labouring the point about freedom to enjoy oneself—and I do not apologise for that—I believe that some people in this country, including some hon. Members and even some Ministers—although I am not referring to the Minister of State—would like to see a ban on all events that are attended by large numbers of young people. I am sure that many hon. Members who are present in the Chamber now would find that wrong and oppressive and that they believe that all people should be free to do what they wish, provided that they do so with fair consideration for other people and within the framework of the law.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The hon. Gentleman has said that there are Ministers—not including my right hon. Friend on the Treasury Bench, who can answer for himself—who are against large public events. Will he tell us who they are?

Mr. Randall: Perhaps I should withdraw that comment. I am not prepared to mention names. Although I have been told that certain people are opposed to these things, it would not be appropriate for me to pursue that issue because they are not present to defend themselves. Therefore, I withdraw that point.

However, I know that certain people—perhaps the middle-aged white males who have been referred to—tend to be a little intolerant of young people and say, "We do not want that kind of nonsense taking place." In my view, that is oppressive and wrong.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Who?

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman asks, "Who?" Perhaps he should talk to people about this matter as I have done. I have talked to local authorities, to the promoters and to young people and have looked at the correspondence that has been sent to the House. No one disputes that there is a group of people—I am not sure how big it is or whether it represents a minority or a majority—who believe that young people are terrors and that they should not be allowed to enjoy themselves. In principle, that is wrong and unacceptable.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): As a sponsor of the Bill, I assure the hon. Gentleman on behalf of most of my colleagues that we were young once as well.

Mr. Norris: No.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend must speak for himself. I and many of my colleagues remember going to major music festivals such as that at the Isle of Wight and the national jazz and blues festival at Windsor. We understand such events and we enjoyed them. I promoted a concert at which the best selling album in the world was recorded —The Who Live at Leeds in 1971. That was one of many concerts that I promoted. I faced problems with the police, the local authority, the fire service and so on. I assure anyone considering the Bill that no legitimate promoter has anything to fear from it.

Mr. Randall: I am interested to hear the way in which the hon. Gentleman promoted himself as a promoter. I should have thought that the House would not wish to ignore the reservations expressed by the president of the Concert Promoters Association about the Bill.

The point that I make is simple. As a Member of Parliament I have picked up a reaction—I should be grossly surprised if other hon. Members had not picked it up—that young people are anti-establishment and like to kick over the traces a little. It is felt that these parties are an opportunity for them to do so, and it is resented by many people. In principle, people should be free to do their own thing—I would encourage that—but they must do it in a way which is fair, reasonable and within the confines of the law. That is my position and I shall not move from it.

What are the prospects for illegal acid house parties? Some people have said that they are a passing fad which will die away. However, the police and the Minister—who seems to be enjoying himself—predict that there will be a resumption of illegal acid house parties this year when the weather warms up. In the short term, it seems that the problem will persist.

Promoters can make huge profits from such parties, so that they will be content, as they have been in the past, to conduct their illegal events and pay the current penalties, which are not too onerous. But what happens in the short term depends on the House. If Parliament takes action, it can protect the country against such abuses.

I have an article from *The Guardian* dated 3 February entitled:

"Police fear acid house boom in spring."

It gives some of the statistics on parties, which I found interesting. It says:

"Between October 30 1989 and January 14 1990 there were: 249 parties monitored, 44 stopped in advance by injunctions and other means, 20 raided as a result of police intelligence, 45 allowed to go ahead, 140 never took place, possibly because of advance police action, but also because of 'scam' ticketing."

The Minister referred to that problem and the House welcomed his comment that people pay with the intention of going to a party and then suddenly it does not take place. That is disgraceful.

"169 arrested for public order offences (organisers or persons with offensive weapons) 57 arrested for drugs offences (possession and dealers) 8 arrested with firearms, including sawn off shotguns and revolvers, 33 arrests for other crimes."

It is clear from those figures that there is a serious criminal dimension to illegal acid house parties. That cannot be refuted.

[Mr. Randall]

Apart from a tiny minority of exceptions, all acid house parties so far have been illegal. That means that entertainment licences were probably not obtained before the event took place. Some people have argued that acid house parties are merely occasions when young people go out to enjoy themselves and that no criminal activities take place. The figures that I have just given the House demonstrate clearly that that argument is fallacious. If it were true that parties were merely opportunities for people to dance and to listen to music, I should expect the people who make those claims to support the argument for making the events legal by obtaining an entertainment licence via the local authority. By becoming licensed, an event comes under the control of the local authority, whose responsibility it is to ensure that affairs are conducted in the interests of both those attending and the people who live in the vicinity.

The Opposition will support the Second Reading of the Bill for two reasons. First, we support that part of the Bill which increases substantially the penalties for illegal acid house parties. Secondly, we shall support the Bill today on the understanding—I noted carefully what the hon. Gentleman said in his speech—that in Committee the hon. Gentleman and, hopefully, the Government will give reasonable consideration to any amendments aimed at protecting the interests of genuine and acceptable promoters who operate within the framework of the law. I accept the argument of the hon. Gentleman that if such amendments created unreasonable loopholes in the Bill with regard to operating a licensed event, they could be exploited by the unscrupulous cowboy operators who currently operate outside the law to make a profit from illegal parties. Clearly we shall take that into account.

If the promoters do not co-operate to protect the genuine promoters and the availability of festival sites—we are worried about losing such sites—regretfully we may have to oppose the Bill in its later stages.

Although the Bill is directed at music festivals, it could result in even local barn dances and more traditional festivals falling foul of the new penalties. Clearly we shall need assurance on that in Committee, if the Bill receives a Second Reading today.

Although a promoter may have excellent intentions about running a legal event, in a large crowd there is always the chance of a few hotheads causing trouble and breaking the terms of the licence. I have talked to Mr. David Burton, the environmental health manager of Mendip district council, who monitors the Glastonbury festival. He feels that the existing penalties are realistic for violations of the conditions of licences, and he is working at grassroots level. The Bill seems to be unnecessarily heavy handed on licence violations and could have the undesirable effect of making certain venues no longer available. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Gravesham, (Mr. Arnold) laughs, but the risks for the promoters would be too great.

If a local authority and the police feel that a licence should not be issued, the council has discretion not to issue it. The fines could be so onerous that many people whom we would support and who operate legally might feel that the risk of incurring them was too great, because it is sometimes difficult to control everybody at such events, and might withdraw from holding the events. That would mean that the venues of traditional festivals would be lost. That is our anxiety and why we believe that the Bill is too heavy handed.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Gentleman talks about the environmental health manager on the ground in the Mendips—and there is no better place for such a manager to be than checking these matters on the ground. Others on the ground include the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), some of whom complain, with reason, about pollution to water courses, nuisances, noise and access. What message does the hon. Gentleman have for legitimate concert promoters about their duties to local residents? Does he agree that they have a positive duty to minimise nuisance to local residents, such as the constituents of my hon. Friend?

Mr. Randall: Naturally; I completely support that. The terms and conditions of the licence provide the mechanism for ensuring that responsibility to the local community. The licences are adoptive licences and it is for the local authority to insert the terms and conditions. If promoters fail to adhere to its terms and conditions, the council merely has to revoke the licence in future. If people are in the promotions business, it is not in their interests to ruin their opportunities of running a concert or festival in future. From my discussions with the head of environmental health on Mendip council, I believe that the existing arrangements for licensed events work perfectly satisfactorily. Local councils have discretion to determine the terms and conditions governing the issue of a licence. It is then up to local people to make representations to local councillors if they feel that they want those conditions enhanced.

The people in the legitimate part of the entertainments business are well known, and they all know each other well. They are also known to the police. In addition, there is a six-week cycle for issuing a licence. From the time the application is made, representations against it can be made. That is a safeguard which local authorities must ensure exists.

If an event organiser were to violate the conditions of the licence, he would know that that would threaten his chance of getting a licence in future, so business opportunities would be lost. Obviously that is a powerful stick which local authorities have. It is important for them to ensure that the conditions in the licence are sufficiently comprehensive. I know of one local authority which has laid down in the licence only conditions about loud music. The matter is for it to decide, but I believe that that is too limited. A comprehensive set of criteria is needed to enable the local authority to carry out proper monitoring of an enforcement at these events.

I question the value of increasing the penalties for violations at legal events provided in the Bill because of the serious side effects that could arise from imposing heavy fines. We could lose those venues because promoters would fear huge fines and the loss of profitability on an event. The Committee must consider that thoroughly. We must protect the interests of legitimate promoters and ensure that we do not knock them out of business and replace them with undesirable cowboy elements. If we succeed, we shall give the country good service. Many people who have been affected by the undesirable aspects

of acid house parties would welcome that and breathe a sigh of relief to think that the House of Commons has taken action on this important issue.

11.56 am

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me relatively early in the debate. I apologise to Members on both Front Benches for the fact that I may have to leave for my constituency before my hon. Friend the Minister has completed his speech.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on doing so well in the ballot and on using his opportunity with such good sense and judgment to introduce this Bill. He has chosen a measured approach to deal with this difficulty. Although I shall make one or two points which are important for my constituents, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) that we are seeking to curb irregularities, not to diminish the pleasure of young people.

I detected in the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) a certain reverse agism in categorising young people. I hope that he will also remember that they are affected by the serious negative consequences of these large gatherings. They may be trying to sleep through the noise or be stuck in the traffic jams. They, too, suffer from these difficulties.

The hon. Gentleman may have read the witty article by Mr. Peter McKay, that famous Fleet street diarist in which he said:

"Young people will be young people",

pooh-poohing the efforts of many of us to reduce the numbers of these parties. He wrote that he was listening to the

"Terrible droning noise—that familiar sound of the middle aged and old being outraged by the young."

That is a legitimate point and we must bear it in mind.

The fact is that serious problems are raised by acid house parties—not only drugs problems, although that is one of the most important. We heard about two deaths in Leicestershire. In many ways these parties are the successors to the original blues parties. They are not the sort of parties that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I tend to go to. Many of them start at 4 am, when I would be detained in the House.

Although the parties need an entertainment licence, the police have to rely upon a mishmash of relevant laws, none of which addresses the specific problem. The Bill will be extremely helpful.

My hon. Friends have already spoken about the complete lack of a deterrent and the way in which the law is being brought into disrepute by the failure to take action. The fine is so modest that it is merely seen as an on-cost by the organisers, who then take their enormous profits and move on to organise another party.

I have spoken to the Nottinghamshire police about this problem. They do an excellent job in my constituency all year round. Although there has been only one attempt to hold a party in Nottinghamshire, the police are extremely concerned. There was an attempt to hold a party at the end of last year at or near Ratcliffe on Soar power station. The police received advance notice because of widespread advertising in Birmingham and London as well as in Nottingham, and they were able to persuade the promoters to cancel the party.

We are aware of the danger of the drug problem escalating in the midlands. The Nottinghamshire police feel that the parties appeal to young, usually responsible, people. But there is not only evidence of corruption at those parties, but a calculation to corrupt. We should be anxious to protect young people from such corruption.

The Nottinghamshire police have been extremely successful in dealing with a number of drug problems, and my hon. Friend the Minister will be delighted to hear that, in the past six months alone, there have been three significant seizures of crack in Nottingham and a seven-year prison sentence was handed down. The police have a good record on keeping drugs out of our schools in Nottingham, which is extremely important.

My hon. Friend the Minister has already spoken about bogus ghost parties where young people are ripped off by the promoters who take the money to the bank. A culture of deceit and organised crime hides behind such parties. There is the business of hiding the location of the party from the police, and the surreptitious way in which the tickets are sold as well as the alternative location that can be called upon if the primary location is discovered.

The parties are a local nuisance and are redolent of the 1960 pop festivals. There is a lack of consideration for local people and the misery caused to them. Such is the nuisance caused that, in some cases, the noise from the parties has been heard 10 miles away. Problems also arise from traffic congestion, parking and the size of the crowds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) has already spoken about safety, and its importance cannot be minimised. The emergency services would have great difficulty if they had to gain access to such parties. The lack of access combined with the lack of suitable facilities and proper safety equipment is extremely important. Policing such events is extremely difficult, and it would be virtually impossible for the police to take action when so many people were gathered in such confined space.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can give me advice on three matters that have been brought to my attention by local authorities. First, schedule 1 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 clearly encompasses quasi-private events and case law supports that. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would help enforcement if that was spelt out? If my hon. Friend cannot give me an answer today, I should be grateful to receive a letter so that I can reassure the local authorities. Secondly, given the precedent that we have set on drug offenders, does he think that those who are convicted of law breaking under the Bill should be obliged to forfeit their ill-gotten gains? Thirdly, given my hon. Friend's particular interest in protecting young people and making parents more responsible for the crimes of their children —I appreciate that that does not have a direct application today—I hope that he will keep under review whether further Home Office measures are required to protect young people from the innate corruption of acid house parties.

I hope that the Minister will consult closely with the police and the local authorities. Despite my absolute conviction that we never want to see such a party in Gedling, I do not want to be regarded as a party-pooper —the phrase used by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South. I am not a regular reader of *Melody Maker* any more but I wish the Bill every success. I do not believe that it will exert a downward pressure on enjoyment, as

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

feared by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West. The Bill is sensible and prudent, and I am glad that the Opposition support it. I hope that it will have a speedy and successful journey through Committee.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise for interrupting private Members' time and I shall be brief. The announcement of the closure of the Wheal Jane tin mine in my constituency, which was supported by the Department of Trade and Industry, has just been made. I do not know whether a statement has been sought and I would appreciate your guidance on whether there is any way in which I can raise this tragic blow for my constituency on a Friday, which I appreciate is a difficult time for the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Chair is never in a position to offer guidance across the Floor to hon. Members, but Mr. Speaker has not received a request from a Minister to make a statement this morning.

12.6 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It might be for the convenience of the House if I spoke now, and convenient to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) if I answered his three questions before he goes off to his constituency.

My hon. Friend raised a point about the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 about which I shall write to him. That was very much a Committee point and my hon. Friend is in grave danger of finding himself on Standing Committee C as a result. I shall support any application he makes to the Chairman of the Committee of Selection.

My hon. Friend also raised an important point about confiscation with which I agree. I accept his strictures and we need to implement an order under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 as quickly as possible so that criminal proceeds of more than £10,000 are confiscated after conviction. If we do that we shall make life much more difficult for those who promote illegal entertainments.

My hon. Friend was also concerned about the very young who might attend such parties. I do not believe that anyone in the House would consider it stuffy or old fashioned if I said that there are moral dangers for young people aged 13 or 14 who may go to an acid house party. They may be exposed to drugs for the first time in their lives.

I shall continue to keep under review the suggestions of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that we should do more to make parents responsible for children and for children's offending. Five years ago such an idea would have been received with outrage by the Opposition and some opinion in the country, but it has now found its time and has gained widespread assent.

Now that I have answered the three points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling I wish him a safe journey there, wherever it may be and no acid parties.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: My hon. Friend used to teach geography!

Mr. John Patten: It was a joke. I know exactly where it is—it is to the east of Nottingham. I have been to Gedling and it is a fine constituency.

Mr. Mitchell: Absolutely right.

Mr. Patten: We all suffer from boundary commissioners giving otherwise properly named places strange names for boundary purposes.

I note that other hon. Friends are present and I should be interested to hear their contributions if they are fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) is present, as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who has already made a contribution, and my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) who has had constituency problems as a result of such parties.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), whom I have always thought of as a politician-barrister, I shall now think of him as a pop promoter, politician and barrister. We look forward to hearing more about what he has to say about his past career in promoting musical festivals and long-playing records in the dark ages of 1971 and 1972.

My most important introductory point is to express the gratitude of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and myself to our hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) for introducing the Bill. The country will be shocked if the Bill does not receive a Second Reading or does not make speedy progress in Committee to become law before the summer. If it does not make such progress, the country will know who to blame. I welcome the fact that the Opposition have said that they will give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South is well known in the House for taking up difficult issues of considerable public concern, through private Member's legislation, and seeing them through successfully to the statute book. All of us here this morning will remember that in 1984, my hon. Friend took through a Bill to outlaw what were known colloquially as "video nasties". It was a difficult Bill on a difficult issue. My hon. Friend was deluged with additional work in seeing the Bill through to the statute book. Now five or six years later, we find him taking another difficult law and order issue head on. My hon. Friend is not frightened to debate the issues with the outside world, with interest groups and with those who will continue to make large sums if his Bill fails.

My hon. Friend and his extremely small staff are having to deal with the Bill. He deserves the help of the whole House in its progress and he deserves the admiration of the country for showing how private Members can bring forward successfully a major piece of legislation and see it through to the statute book.

Let us be clear what we are talking about and let us have no more loose talk about acid house parties. As I said earlier, the illegal entertainments are pay-parties where promoters make substantial sums—often from parties that never happen. It is a deeply corrupt practice. Many young people pay £15, £20 or £30 for tickets for ghost parties that never happen. The use of the phrase "acid house parties", with its implications of drug taking and glamorous music, is part and parcel of luring young people into believing that the parties are glamorous and exciting occasions. Perhaps they sometimes are for those who seek excitement.

However, my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) told us this morning about the dangers that are implicit and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling spoke of the moral dangers for very young people who go to such parties. Let us have no more glamorous titles. The parties are a way for evil and corrupt men to make a lot of money.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My right hon. Friend raises a serious point, which is that some of the pay-parties do not take place, thereby providing illicit gains for the promoters. The Bill does not deal with that point. Will my right hon. Friend's Department have a further look at how we might get at those criminals?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. We shall, of course, look at the matter further. Various offences concerning conspiracy and other alleged offences are already on the statute book and they might, if sufficient evidence is found, be enough to bring a successful prosecution in court. However, I shall consider my hon. Friend's point and I shall write to him as soon as possible to give him a list of the categories of offence on the statute book. I shall see whether my hon. Friend believes that we need to fill any chink in our legislative armour further. I am grateful to him for making that point.

Let us consider the up-to-date figures on pay-parties in the south-east of England. In Gravesend—I pay tribute to the police there—there is the police intelligence unit which monitors parties in East Anglia, in the south-east and in the Metropolitan district. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher has just talked about parties that are advertised, but never happen. From 31 October 1989, when the unit was set up, until 4 March 1990, the latest date for which we have accurate information, 161 parties were advertised in the south-east, in East Anglia, and in the Metropolitan district. Tickets were sold at £20 or £30 to innocent people, yet the parties never happened. Sixty four pay-parties were prevented by the police.

Thanks to the work of the police, to whom I pay tribute and who would greatly prefer to be out and about on their normal policing duties, another 32 parties have been stopped since the unit was set up. The unit has also monitored arrests over the same period. I can confirm the figures given by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). There have been 261 arrests under public order offences; 76 concerned drugs, eight concerned firearms and 69 concerned other crimes. Those figures also apply to the south-east, East Anglia and the Metropolitan district.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) spoke about the dreadful events in Accrington and nearby in his constituency where organisations trying to promote employment were broken into and their furniture was destroyed so that an acid house party might take place. The police in Lancashire advise us that several unlicensed parties are being held each weekend, usually in warehouses.

On the weekend of 24 and 25 February, the police stopped one party before it began and another that was already under way. Among the equipment of the party-givers at the party that was stopped before it began, there was a sawn-off shotgun. That is the style in which pay-parties are now developing. On the weekend of 3 and 4 March, the police concentrated their resources on a night club that party organisers had designated as a rendezvous point and prevented many people from locating the parties. Several arrests have already been made which range over alleged offences relating to public entertainment laws, to drugs and to the possession of an offensive weapon.

I am happy to report that the police are receiving excellent co-operation from local authorities. I pay tribute to local authorities and to environmental health officers, who are moving more swiftly as they have become used to applying the law. They are flexing their muscles under the present public health and other legislation. Those who seek to operate illegal pay-parties must watch out for local government officials in the coming party season, which will begin soon.

I have given what I hope is a useful review of the present position and statistics. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South gave a vivid explanation of the problem that the country faces. As he explained, the Bill seeks to introduce substantial increases in the penalties for certain existing offences against the law governing the licensing of entertainments that involve music and dancing. That is strongly supported by all my hon. Friends who have spoken so far and I should be surprised if any hon. Member dissented from that line. My hon. Friend's motive for seeking to make these changes is, as he pointed out, the need for urgent and effective action to be taken to curb the recent development of these parties, especially since last autumn.

I am sure that the House will be grateful for the way in which my hon. Friend described the enormous problems that these events can cause for people adversely affected by them. Chiefly, these are the residents of the areas selected by the organisers for their parties. I am a bit disappointed not to have heard more from the promoters of legitimate events about the sort of action that they take to minimise the offences, nuisance and noise that affect local residents. We all have rights: young people have rights, but young and old people who do not go to the parties have the right to enjoy a certain amount of peace and quiet.

Mr. Randall: I recognise that more could be said on that point by the promoters, but they have nevertheless made the strong point that the fines and possible prison sentences against those who operate in an unlicensed and therefore illegal way should be made more severe.

Mr. Patten: I am happy to have that assurance from the hon. Gentleman. He will, however, recognise that ordinary people who live in the surrounding areas have to suffer a great deal of unjustifiable disturbance, such as traffic congestion, litter and other forms of harm to their environment—and, worst of all, a long period of unbroken noise deep into the night——

Mr. Ian Taylor: And into the following morning.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is correct. Noise is one of the worst effects. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, know better than most of us what the effects of late-night sittings are, as you so often adorn the Chair deep into the night. What a pleasure it is for me to come occasionally to answer an Adjournment debate at 4 am when you are in the Chair. Most of us in this place know the effects of broken sleep, and these parties always seem to run late at night, often beginning on Saturday and continuing through the night and for most of the next day. Such disturbance of people's peaceful environment at weekends is unacceptable to any

[Mr. Patten]

reasonable and decent community. There is a world of difference between wanting people to enjoy themselves and trying to strike a balance between their right to do so and the right of others to a peaceful environment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South also laid considerable emphasis on the potential dangers to young people who attend these parties. As my hon. Friend said in his vivid speech, they are often held at short notice in a deliberate attempt to circumvent the activities of those who are responsible for the enforcement of the laws on noise control and entertainment licensing in buildings such as the disused warehouses and farm outbuildings mentioned by my hon. Friend. Such buildings are usually unsuited to the purpose, lacking even the basic facilities that are necessary to health and safety.

I guess that no illegal pay-party that has ever been held in this country could have been licensed. Those who buy tickets to attend them should beware lest they find themselves going to places that lack the basic amenities which would help them enjoy their evening—proper toilets and refreshments are part of going out, whatever one's age. Parties held without such facilities would be unpleasant, at least for some people.

Mr. Randall: One was successfully held in Wales.

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman wants to speak up in favour of unlicensed parties, let him do so.

Mr. Randall: I am not talking about unlicensed pay-parties; we are talking about licensed ones——

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening.

Mr. Randall: An acid house party took place satisfactorily a few weeks ago in Wales. If the licensing procedure is properly followed, there is no reason why people should not go ahead with such parties.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is usually extremely alert, but for the past three or four minutes I have been talking about unlicensed parties. If he reads *Hansard* on Monday he will be able to confirm that, and I look forward to receiving his handwritten apology once he has read the record. I have nothing against licensed parties—well conducted—for any group in society.

I know that some of the more open and forthcoming organisers of these events make great play of the fact that they let the police and fire services in to inspect their venues and that they take action on their recommendations. However, that is often done only at the last minute and the authorities cannot make the sort of detailed inspection that should usually precede the issue of a proper entertainment licence. There is no doubt that the development of pay-parties has given rise to a number of serious problems on which quick and firm action is required. I will hear no criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South for bringing forward his Bill before publication of other arrangements for regulating entertainments of various sorts. He has acted promptly, for which the House should be grateful.

It has fallen in the main to the police and local authorities to take action under the existing law, and they can employ a number of provisions against these events. The police already have adequate powers to deal with criminal offences that might occur at pay-parties. We have heard the list of arrests given to the House by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West and by me, so we know how the police have been using their powers—and a good thing, too. They have powers to deal with offences connected with the misuse of drugs or with threats to public order. They also have wide powers under the common law to prevent breaches of the peace and public nuisance. They work closely with local authorities to prevent the holding of unlicensed parties.

Because the organisers are flouting the entertainment licensing requirements and organising their parties in as much secrecy as possible, the police in south-east England have set up an intelligence unit to strengthen their co-ordination and intelligence arrangements. Can my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South inform the House of how secret these parties usually are? Does he think that almost all of them are arranged in secret, or that merely some of them are?

Mr. Bright: Most of these parties are planned secretively and it takes a considerable amount of intelligence work by the police to discover the rendezvous points. It is not merely a question of finding out where a party is; often that will not be discovered until half an hour before the off. The arrangements are made by broadcasting on pirate radio or CB radio. The latest and most trendy way of doing this is to use runners with Vodaphones who rush to the rendezvous point and tell the convoy where to go next. I accept that there are parties that are planned properly, but only those with a licence dare disclose where they will be held.

Mr. Patten: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's evaluation. He has made it plain that secrecy is part of the success of an illicit pay-party. If such parties were not secret, the authorities would properly prevent them from taking place. I guess that it is secrecy that has led to problems in Kent, for example. I know that these problems have concerned my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham. I pay tribute to the Kent constabulary for what it has done to try to stamp out the appalling nuisance that has occurred in the constituencies of my right hon and hon. Friends.

The police unit concerned with this issue is in Gravesend. Its aim is to target party organisers so that potential sites are identified early and appropriate action is taken. This may involve speaking to landowners, who may have been misled, as has happened on a number of occasions, about the true nature of the event that is about to take place on their land. There have been one or two deluded landowners. They have been surprised to learn that they have been invaded by a pay-party.

The local authority could be involved in taking legal action to ensure injunctions to prevent breaches of the entertainment licensing laws or control of noise nuisance legislation.

The police have done a marvellous job in preventing many illicit parties. Where it has not proved possible to do that, their concern has been to try as best they can to ensure that there is safety at parties and to minimise the disturbance and inconvenience that is caused to the local community. I have heard—I have asked for further advice from within the Home Office on this—of one pay-party that was held in a warehouse in Lancashire in the past month. It was a disused warehouse and some signs within

it pointed towards some doors which were marked "Exit". When people opened the doors they found a sheer drop into a stream or river below. When the warehouse was closed, some of the fire exits had been removed. It was a redundant building.

That is an example of the safety problem that young people face. It is only through good fortune, I believe, that young people have not been seriously injured or have not lost their lives. We and the police will have to work so hard in the spring, summer and autumn of this year to ensure that there is not loss of life. I do not think that it is stuffy or boring to tell young people to watch it. That applies to being ripped off by unscrupulous operators who charge large sums for parties that do not take place and to being alert to the danger of being lured into a building that could be turned into a fire trap if something went wrong. The result could be conflagration and the collapse of floors, leading to serious injury and death.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there have been fatalities and that there was a recent example in Italy where at a so-called rave-up 60 young people died? That is a graphic example of the dangers that are being run.

Mr. Patten: My instinct is that there is a serious chance of that happening in this country because of the way in which parties are organised. It is only by good fortune that it has not happened. We have heard of cables sparking on the floor and of cables passing through sheeting of various sorts. Such arrangements could easily lead to fire, and it is only due to good fortune and luck that there have not been fatalities on a large scale.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend referred to a warehouse in Lancashire. He may be interested to know that there has been a great deal of concern about the matter. A Granada television programme called "Up Front" will be shown next Friday. It will be produced in the warehouse and will highlight for young people throughout the north-west the very dangers to which my right hon. Friend has referred.

Mr. Patten: Most young people want to go out to enjoy themselves and not end up injured or dead. I hope that the programme will have an impact on young people and make them cautious about spending their money on parties that do not take place and cautious about where they go because they might end up seriously injured, disabled or, worst of all, dead. My fear is that such results could ensue, and that is why the Bill is so important. That is why it is a critically important part of our prevention strategy. That is why I believe that nothing and no one should stand in the way of the Bill. No one should seek to stop it reaching the statute book.

The concern of the police is always to ensure safety. That is the concern, too, of local authorities, which also wish to minimise the disturbance and inconvenience that is caused to the local community. That is why we have local entertainment licensing laws. We have discussed within the Home Office and with the police—the discussions have been led by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—what further action might be necessary in respect of pay-parties. The police have not thus far considered it necessary to seek additional powers, but they are concerned that with the return of better weather in the next few months we shall see an upsurge in the number of pay-parties. They are concerned also that, unless something is done, police resources will be tied up. That would not be a good thing. Therefore they join the Government in supporting the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South to secure a substantial increase in the penalties for offences against existing entertainment licensing laws, in an attempt to prevent parties from happening in the first place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South has explained in some detail the framework of the entertainment licensing laws in England, Wales and Scotland. Unless the House requests me to go over it again in greater detail, and I do not see any of my hon. Friends rising to suggest that I should impose that on the House, I shall not do so, because my hon. Friend has done it as well as I could have done. He explained that it is already an offence to provide and, in certain circumstances, to allow a premises to be used for music or dancing as a public entertainment or, provided that the local authority has taken the steps necessary to adopt the appropriate Act, as a private entertainment that is being promoted for private gain, without a licence being obtained in advance from the relevant licensing authority in the main district or regional council—that is why the Association of District Councils is so interested—and in the London borough councils.

I know that the organisers of pay-parties often say that they are perfectly lawful activities which do not require to be licensed. That is not for me but for the courts to decide.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South explained, whether an entertainment is public depends on whether there is evidence that any member of the public could attend the entertainment on paying admission, if required. On that basis it seems to us that at many pay-parties there is what amounts to an admission charge. Large numbers of people attend and there is music for them to dance to—there is post-dated Coca Cola for them to drink, as we were advised earlier—and that sort of party would normally be required to be licensed under the public entertainment licensing law. If it were suggested that a particular party was a private entertainment, it is our view that because of the high profits that the organisers freely admit they are making from such events, a licence could legitimately be required under the Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967, which concerns entertainments that are not public but which are promoted for private gain.

The penalties for offences against entertainment licensing laws, which vary in detail between each particular Act as my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South has already pointed out, are relatively light. On some occasions they are very light in comparison with the huge profits that unscrupulous people have begun to make by promoting unlicensed entertainments. Unfortunately, those penalties no longer provide a deterrent. Part of the running costs of an entertainment are to provide for the payment of such future fines.

The organisers of pay-parties and those who assist their endeavours by knowingly allowing their premises to be used for such events can at present afford to ignore the law, because they are making so much money. It is therefore necessary as a matter of urgency that those events should be brought under effective licensing control and that the organisers and others involved should be deterred from continuing to operate outside the law.

[Mr. Patten]

The Bill is an important element in the achievement of that objective. It will enable the summary courts to impose fines of up to £20,000 on people convicted of particular offences against the entertainment licensing laws that I have mentioned, or to send them to prison for up to six months, or both. If the Bill gets through, and people are brought to trial I guess that the courts will impose the maximum penalty, including prison sentences in the worst cases, and I judge that they would be right to do so.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary also intends to use his powers under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 to give magistrates in England and Wales authority to order the confiscation of profits that exceed £10,000. That is an important provision: when we took the Act through its Committee stage we made great play of the fact that we did not wish offenders to be undeterred by the penalties because they knew that they could keep the proceeds of their crimes.

I warn the organisers of illicit pay-parties that it will not be long before that order is debated, and that once it has received all-party assent—as I am sure that it will—they will be faced not only with fines of up to £20,000 and /or six months' imprisonment under this excellent Bill, but with the possibility of confiscation of their equipment and the proceeds of their crime. Ours is a twin-track approach, combining the aim of a private Member to increase penalties with the Government"s aim to improve our ability to confiscate the ill-gotten gains of people who prey on the young by laying on unsafe and expensive entertainments—or entertainments that never happen.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has considered providing for a similar confiscation power in Scotland. He is awaiting a report from the Scottish Law Commission, and will announce his intentions later this year. As hon. Members know, statutory provison in Scotland is different from that south of the border.

My hon. Friend's Bill, together with the order from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, will go a long way towards reducing both unacceptable disturbance and damage to the environment—sometimes permanent, damage, involving the loss of trees and the pollution of water courses and hedgerows. It will minimise the risks to young people's safety, and do much to reduce the noise pollution suffered by local residents. We do not seek to ban enjoyable events that are properly organised, as has been suggested in the popular press; our aim is to make it no longer worthwhile for the organisers of pay-parties, and others associated with them, to continue to operate outside the established licensing system—whose commendable objectives are to secure the health and safety of those attending events, and to regulate the nuisance caused to the neighbourhood.

I am happy to say that the Bill has the Government's full support. We shall give it every assistance, and I hope that no one hinders its safe passage to the statute book, where it is badly needed.

12.43 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on his continuing good fortune in the ballots for private Members' Bills and on his choice for his second Bill which, like the first, is timely and far-sighted.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, there was absolutely no doubt about the need for my hon. Friend's Video Recordings Act 1984, in response to growing public concern about video nasties, as articulated by the admirable Mrs. Mary Whitehouse. My hon. Friend is now responding to growing public concern about the potential tragedy and disaster that large-scale, uncontrolled gatherings of many hundreds, or even thousands, of people might cause. I am pleased to have been asked to be one of the co-sponsors.

The Bill seeks to protect people, particularly young people, from all dangers, obvious or otherwise, that are inherent in any large-scale event. Many of those dangers have become evident as a result of the disasters of recent years: there is the danger caused by crowds of people being packed together in premises that were neither designed nor built for the purpose, with inadequate entrances and exits, no toilets and no first aid facilities; the danger of criminal involvement in terms of drugs, theft and vandalism; the danger of traffic congestion that prevents the emergency services being able to assist in case of fire or structural collapse.

In addition to providing protection for those who take part in the events, the Bill would protect those who live in the neighbourhood and those who use the roads leading to the events. Far from being a killjoy Bill, as has been suggested, it must be regarded as an anti-killjoy Bill. Such events would take place at nobody's expense, as ought to be the case.

The national press would have us believe that these events, which it describes as acid house parties, take place in the home counties—around London and the M25 where 100 parties were broken up last year. However, they are much more widespread. Last August bank holiday, 3,000 people gathered at a former bus station in my constituencey for such a party. The sheer volume of people and the threat to public order that they constituted resulted in the chief constable of Dorset having to obtain aid from Hampshire to disperse the partygoers. There were some arrests.

My hon. Friend's Bill has the full support of the chief constable of Dorset. He is drawing up new contingency plans to deal effectively with such gatherings, should they again descend on Dorset. Successful and attractive family resorts such as Bournemouth, where tourism represents a major industry on which many hundreds of small businesses and many thousands of jobs depend, cannot afford adverse publicity such as this. The local authority must have the power to control and determine whether, and when, such gatherings can take place, as provided for in the Bill. For that reason, my borough council has asked me to support it.

My hon. Friend's Bill would deny to nobody, of any age, the right to go to a party and enjoy it in the company of others, provided that they do so in safety and at no one else's expense, either indoors or outside. However, I thought that it might help if I were to find out what young people in my constituency think about the Bill. I approached the heads of all the secondary schools in my

constituency and suggested that an appropriate class or group of young people might care to discuss the Bill's provisions and let me have their conclusions. I am delighted with the constructive and considered responses I have received and I thank those from Summerbee school, Avonbourne school, Winton school, St. Peter's Roman Catholic school and the Wentworth Milton Mount school who wrote to me. Most of them accepted the need for local authority control. Many pointed out that responsible party organisers will have nothing to fear from seeking to apply for a licence. The consequent awareness of the police, the ambulance service and the fire service should be regarded as being in the best interests of all those involved, not least those running the events commercially, because they want to build on a reputation for safety.

However, several of my younger constituents made the point that the term "acid house" with its consequent association with LSD and other drugs has resulted in a misleading perception of such events which the national press and the media generally have only sought to exaggerate and exploit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South said, acid house is a completely separate description for a style of music deriving its term from Chicago slang, and that to avoid that misleading and damaging image, such events nowadays are more frequently termed wrath parties, rages or raves. My hon. Friend has already demonstrated that he is aware of that new terminology for such events.

The consistent point that came through strongly from my younger constituents who wrote to me about the Bill is that young people, in the company of many others if that is their choice, should have the right and the freedom to enjoy loud music, bright and flashing lights and the availability of alcohol for those of age, and I do not dissent from that. One common fear running through many of the comments I received was that once local authorities obtain the powers that the Bill would give them, local councillors would prove to be so prejudiced against such parties that they would refuse most if not all applications.

I know my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South well enough to know that if he thought that that would happen, he would not be introducing the Bill. He will recall the many times when he and I organised large-scale Young Conservative functions outdoors as well as inside, attracting many thousands of young people successfully, enjoyably and without problems, even if they sometimes clogged up the rural lanes of Essex. Of course we informed the police and the other supporting services which were at hand.

I hope that local authorities will take the view that every application for a licence should be granted provided that they are satisfied that safety rquirements have been met and that adequate car parking and so on have been provided by the organisers and that the event is properly insured. However, I accept that local authorities may wish to place a limit on the numbers according to the premises, and that under present circumstances the police must have access to such events. It is a fact of life that where young people gather there is a widespread danger that drugs will be available and there can be no let-up in the war against drugs and those who push them.

In conclusion, my hon. Friend is right to resist the demands from the Association of District Councils for additional measures and penalties to enforce the Bill. I hope that he will continue to do so in Committee. Should the Bill prove to be inadequate, it can be amended and strengthened in the light of its working. As it stands, it should enable young people to enjoy their music and their entertainment in a safe and secure environment at no risk to themselves and without nuisance to anybody else. I hope that it will receive a Second Reading.

12.54 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I have cancelled a series of meetings in my constituency today to be here not only to support this valuable Bill, but to wish it good speed in getting on to the statute book well in advance of summer and the high season of pay-parties. I am disappointed that not a single Labour Back Bencher or member of the Liberal or minority parties is taking part in, or even listening to, today's debate. That demonstrates, at best, indifference to the problem.

Mr. Bright: Before my hon. Friend castigates the Opposition too much, I have sponsors from the Labour party who have all written to me apologising for the fact that they cannot be here because of constituency engagements. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), who hopes to be here within the next few minutes, has also given me a handwritten apology. I have support throughout the House.

Mr. Arnold: I wish that those hon. Members had been here, because this is an extremely important Bill. I am here not least because my constituents have been very much the victims of what has gone on in pay-parties in recent months.

During the evening of 9 September last year the people of Meopham parish in my constituency, who live along the sub-standard A227, were suddenly invaded by 5,000 young people travelling in hundreds of cars who were trying to jam themselves into a field remote from even that A road, tucked away behind the village of Meopham.

The chaos was indescribable, although I shall try to describe it because it will demonstrate the scale and complication of the problem we face. The A road was jammed with vehicles, three abreast. If emergency services had wished to get down that road, for whatever purpose, related or not to the event, they would not have got past. The drivers of those vehicles abandoned them in residents' drives, on the highway itself and even on Meopham's historic cricket green. The police were overwhelmed. The writ of law and order and the civil rights of local residents were trampled into the mud.

Sanitary provision at the event was totally inadequate. The revellers resorted to fouling the gardens of local residents. An adjacent scout camp site, with young cub scouts in camp was invaded. A brave scout leader, who intercepted the intruders, was attacked and injured to the extent that he had to go to hospital.

Throughout the night the disorder frightened residents and the deafening, amplified throbbing sound from the so-called party kept everyone awake. The view which dawn exposed to local people was reminiscent of a wartime evacuation. Cars and their sleeping passengers were scattered in their hundreds around the village, including on residents' properties. Debris was everywhere and blowing about. The party resounded throughout Sunday, and the field of battle was left only late in the day. Local people were left to recover ready for the working week.

One can imagine the residents' feelings the following Sunday when they heard the same cacophony wafting on

[Mr. Arnold]

the wind, as though they were in for another onslaught of harassment. Although they had to put up with the noise, it was the constituents of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) who had to take the brunt of the onslaught of another pay-party at Wrotham, two miles away. My constituents were also treated to the sound effects of yet another such event at about the same time, wafting on the breeze from West Kingsdown. This is a new but thoroughly dangerous phenomenon.

Our local police chief superintendent Ken Tappenden warned recently of the dangers. Speaking only last month he warned:

"Safety standards at these events are so low that disaster could strike at any time. When thousands of people just drop into a field, when you have criminals running the parties, when you have drug-taking, then you have all the elements of a major disaster. Hundreds of young people could be killed or injured. . . .The police were especially worried about the infiltration of East End criminals who saw pay-parties as an easy way of making a lot of money."

Why is so much money involved? Tickets for these parties, cost about £15—and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has mentioned that ticket prices are now rising to £20 or even £30 a time. As there are as many as 15,000 tickets per event, and they are sold in advance, arithmetic will show that the revenue involved in each such event amounts to thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of pounds.

Purchasers are advised to ring specific telephone numbers or to listen to certain radio frequencies at set times.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend has given a clear description of the horrors that faced the constituents in that village. Can he estimate the sums of money that might be made by the organisers? He has rightly been speculating about the enormous ticket prices, and it might help the House if he could give us an estimate.

Mr. Arnold: If one weighs up the rudimentary facilities provided to these people, the ticket prices and the thousands of people involved, the organisers could well clear over £100,000 in the course of only one weekend. That is a significant amount and shows the commercial pressures that apply.

If the purchasers roam around on a Saturday evening, waiting for the off and to find out where the events will be held, and if they then find out from telephone calls or from listening to pirate radio frequencies, the atmosphere of mystery adds to the excitement for the revellers, but creates traffic chaos and a practical nightmare for the police. The consequence of that way of marshalling people for a party at no notice has created large unruly convoys, causing conditions in which the police may be overwhelmed. There was a nasty incident on the M25 when not only were the carriageways blocked, but the policemen concerned had to run for their lives.

Let us take the event in Meopham to which I have referred. Clear information was available only at 7 pm on the Saturday night. An injunction had to be started from scratch, be obtained from a magistrate, and served on the organiser. In the event, the confusion was such that he could not be identified and it was served on the farmer, who ignored it. The penalty available was not imprisonment but a maximum fine of £2,000. Given the figures that have just been mentioned, that is petty cash. In the circumstances, it was a valiant and rapid response by Kent police and Gravesham borough council, but it was ineffective given the state of the law.

So what can we do? We need good intelligence and heavy penalties. We need good police intelligence to combat such events before they even take place. I am glad that a good start has been made. A joint intelligence unit for the south-east, staffed by eight police forces with additional input from the Metropolitan police, has been established in Gravesend in my constituency. It has monitored the planning of some 249 parties, and headed off many of them or stopped them. I should like to pay tribute to the outstanding work carried out in anti-social hours at the Gravesend police station.

However, we also need heavy penalties, and this is where my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South is doing us all such a service with this Bill. It provides for fines of up to £20,000 and—this is an important point—for sentences of up to six months' imprisonment. The current maximum of £2,000 and no custodial sentences outside Greater London is derisory.

When that is combined with the announcement of our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that he favours giving magistrates powers to order the confiscation of profits made by those convicted of organising illegal parties or of allowing their land to be used for them, we are at last making progress. I urge my right hon. Friends to get a move on in bringing forward that order.

We are not killjoys. Thousands of young people enjoy powerful musical events. Conservative Members have made it clear today that in the past they have attended such events and favour them taking place. Indeed, there is no great difference between the pleasure of such partygoers and that of many thousands of Kent residents, including myself, who choose to listen to performances of the 1812, artillery and all, in a valley alongside Leeds castle. At the end of the day, each to his own enjoyment. The only difference is that the events that I described at Leeds castle are properly organised for access, parking, sanitation, noise control and safety and emergency cover. Those are all requirements of the licensing authorities. They are necessary for the events that we are considering today.

The organisers of pay-parties should obtain licences in advance and satisfy the necessary requirements. By all means, let them do so confidentially in advance with the authorities in order to maintain a certain element of mystery, which is part of the enjoyment. My hon. Friend's Bill is an important measure to safeguard the peace and quiet of our constituents, while enforcing the limits within which the parties may operate. It has my wholehearted support.

1.5 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I endorse all the praise expressed by my hon. Friends to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) for introducing the Bill. It deals with a matter which I raised in the House in questions during the autumn, as a result of events in my constituency. I am delighted that there is clear support from my right hon. Friend the Minister today.

It is essential that the Bill is seen not only as an excellent private Member's initiative but as part of the overall sweep

of legislation that the Home Office may introduce. The measure must fit into a careful pattern of legal attempts to clamp down on the criminals who organise such events.

I wish to make it as clear as possible that I and my hon. Friends do not wish to interfere with the rights of young people to enjoy themselves at parties. It may not be credible, but once upon a time I was a right raver. But time passes and I look back forlornly at the enjoyment of my youth. All-night parties were more enjoyable than all-night debates.

Young people who are tempted to enjoy the party atmosphere must be protected if they are being tempted to an event where safety is not held as a prime factor by the organisers. The most worrying factor in what we have called acid house parties but what my right hon. Friend the Minister has properly called pay-parties, is that young people who have a justifiable desire to enjoy themselves at parties are, without realising it, deliberately and cynically put at risk by the organisers. Many parents have written to me about that. They feel that they cannot stop their teenage children going out to enjoy themselves, but they are becoming increasingly aware of the dangers to which teenagers are submitted.

We must take careful note of the fact that the organisers leave everything to the last minute. Clearly, they attempt to evade even the existing powers under the various Acts listed by my right hon. Friend the Minister. Parties have always gone on, but the difference with acid house parties is their magnitude and the locations. Surrey police have stated:

"more sophisticated sound systems and visual equipment has meant that the organisers of these parties have looked elsewhere for more suitable premises"—

suitable in the sense of enormous—

"to 'house' their so called social events. Empty warehouses, factories, offices, shops, cinemas, recording studios etc., are the most common premises which have proved ideal for holding such events. More recently aircraft hangars and marquees that are able to house up to 15,000 people have been used."

None of the premises listed are adapted to cope with the parties held in them. They do not comply with health and safety regulations or fire protection regulations. Clearly, they do not have the various lavatory and other personal facilities required.

The secrecy in the organisation of these parties causes great anxiety and is a good indicator of the organisers' motives. It would be useful for the House to hear what my Surrey police have said about how the parties are called.

"youths congregate at a set location i.e. street, public house etc. and await 'the word' with regard to the location of the proposed party. Posters have also been observed displayed in social clubs, youth clubs, public houses, record shops and even Afro-Caribbean hairdressers. A more recent development has been the use of local pirate radio stations operating on the FM band for communicating this information. It has also been known for commercial radios to have carried such messages. Much use is made of telephone answering machines that give callers the location of meeting points and ticket sale locations. These machines also, at a certain time just prior to the commencement of the party, sometimes state the location of the party."

It is very much at the last minute that the location is given. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, sometimes there is no location and people who have paid in advance do not get a party, but that is a separate matter.

When at the last minute a location is given, people move off from the collecting point in convoys. That causes massive additional difficulties, not just at the ultimate site to which they are moving. For example, at an acid house party near Reigate a massive convoy went around the M25 and parked on the hard shoulder. People then left their cars and walked across fields to the location. The M25, like other motorways, can be dangerous. We can imagine the potential chaos when cars are parked without lights in the dark, particularly with people leaving them and then returning to them in various states and conditions. Those are serious side effects and are directly related to the organisation of the ultimate event.

The organisers are cunning. Surrey constabulary has said:

"The organisers' secrecy over the venues gave little chance for preventive action. If time had permitted there is every likelihood that the local authorities concerned would have taken out injunctions."

The injunctions would be under the powers that local authorities have at present. Obviously, the organisers know that to avoid effective injunctions, they must give no notice whatever. That has forced the police to use various detective methods to find out whether an acid house party is taking place, such as the movement of large vehicles, power generators or whatever. They also rely on local people keeping an eye on local land and buildings where unusual activity is taking place.

The purpose of the entertainment licensing system is to provide a uniform system of control to ensure public health and safety in places of public resort and to minimise the nuisance caused to the immediate neighbourhood from the entertainment that is licensed. Any respectable organiser would accept that and comply with it. It is self-evident that we are dealing with organisers who particularly want to evade that system by using every possible cunning device. I am concerned that such tricks have been used and about their implications.

A pay-party took place in my constituency at Effingham, a pleasant farmland area in the heart of Surrey. Last August bank holiday the village was effectively invaded. The figures are difficult to get at, but it was reported variously that the number of young people arriving from all over the country reached 10,000 at least, possibly several thousand more. The organisers came equipped with amplifiers, laser lighting, generators, food outlets and their own so-called security guards, to whom I shall refer later.

Even though the police got wind of the fact that four large generators were destined for the Guildford area on the Friday, the precise location was not confirmed until 4 pm on Saturday—just a few hours before the party was due to get under way. Not surprisingly, given the late stage and the number of people involved, the police decided on the grounds of public safety that it was better to allow the event to go ahead. That is an important point as it has been alleged that the police could have stopped it. At such a late stage, however, the police had wider considerations. If several thousand people had been turned away from the event they may well have gone on the rampage through Effingham. There would have been a danger to the village if the police had tried, at the last minute, to prevent the party from taking place.

The party went on until Sunday afternoon by which time a number of arrests had been made, including arrests for assaults on police officers and drug-related offences. Seventy police officers had to be deployed to respond to incidents of crime and public order and to supervise the safe dispersal of the people leaving the event. By 10 pm on Saturday evening more than 1,000 cars were parked in

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lanes and side roads close to the venue. That gives some idea of the task faced by the police and also the difficulty faced by the emergency services should they have needed to gain access.

The organisers were issued with a notice from the Guildford borough solicitor and the environmental health officer prohibiting any nuisance under section 58 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Unfortunately that was too little and too late to satisfy the people of Effingham and the surrounding district. In any event the offence currently carries a maximum fine of £2,000, without the possible three-month prison sentence available if such an event takes place within Greater London. That fine would have hardly deterred the organisers.

The Minister asked about figures to demonstrate the profit made at such parties. Independent evidence from the Surrey constabulary states:

"Entrance money is known to be from £5 and £20 per head"—

we know that the larger figure is now more common—

"In the latter case this sometimes includes the cost of transport and drinks. In the case of the larger parties attended by in excess of 10,000 people this nets approximately £100,000 for the organisers".

That is after a fee of a few thousand pounds for the hire of the land given to the landowner or the supplier of the building.

In terms of the profitability of such parties the figures are higher than that, because other things go on, for example, the sale of drugs. The police say that on the figures available:

"controlled drug purchases of heroin, ecstasy and cocaine of between £60 and £100 per head are not unusual. Therefore overall takings in the region of £30,000 to £90,000 for just one party are not an exaggeration".

I must be careful not to make allegations, but the organisers of the parties may have an interest in the drugs sold at them. Whether they do or not, it is clear that there is a massive commercial benefit from holding such parties, yet none of the basic safeguards that would be protected by the current licensing system have been applied. The absence of safeguards is an outrage and an insult to the people going to the party. It also has horrible implications of a disaster waiting to happen as in some cases, there is a massive danger of fire.

My constituents, of course, complained. I live about five miles away from where the party took place and I heard the noise at that distance. These are not completely harmless events. They are extremely dangerous and we should ensure that that is well known. The organisers of the party in Effingham even had the cheek to sue the police. As one of the local newspapers, the *Surrey Advertiser*, said, the police were sued by the acid house party group because they attempted to interfere in activities at that party. That is not only a cheek, but another sign of the fact that the organisers think that they are above the law. They must be brought quickly back under the law.

Mr. John Patten: I have been listening with great interest and growing concern to everything that my hon. Friend has said, especially when he spoke about the experiences of his unfortunate constituents in the village of Effingham in Surrey. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that local residents winkle out the names of the organisers and that maximum publicity is given to those who have caused the trouble? Most importantly, the Inland Revenue, could then know the names of those who have been making substantial illicit profits.

Mr. Taylor: I could not agree more with my right hon. Friend. According to the *Surrey Advertiser*, the people who issued the writ were acting on behalf of the party organisers, Joustyle Limited, which also trades as Karma Productions. I am sure that the various authorities are already aware of that, but if not, I am happy to put it on record.

All this has an extremely worrying impact. There is an impact on the local community. We tend to gloss over that, but I am sure that all hon. Members will understand the dismay, distress and fear when local residents, who have been kept awake all night, find that the party is still continuing on Sunday morning. They see people relieving themselves in gardens and being ill on front drives. The blockage of cars meant that some of my constituents were unable to go to church in their cars on Sunday morning as they wished to do. Such inconvenience is wholly unacceptable and has nothing to do with the sensible provision of enjoyment for young people.

Another danger is that young people will fall foul of the temptations offered by the drug dealers and there are a serious range of problems for the police. The manpower that the police need to put into the field to cover the parties often leads to other elements of the county being seriously underpoliced. I do not want to draw too much attention to that, but it must be taken into consideration.

It is outrageous that such events can take place when, for example, we are arranging for many professional sporting events, which may attract smaller crowds, to have rigorous checks and safety regulations. Exits must now be plentiful and clear. Sprinkler systems must be in operation and trained stewards must be on hand to marshal the crowds. We prevent smoking in certain areas and admission is often only by ticket purchased on a controlled basis in advance. Those measures have been introduced to enhance safety at sporting events, yet none of them apply at these parties, although they can be attended by many more people.

These events must be stopped. Currently available powers are inadequate. My hon. Friend's Bill does not propose new laws, but it provides proper penalties. The combination of the £20,000 fine and up to six months' prison sentences is critical.

If the acid house or pay-party tendency is allowed to continue it will lead to deaths, particularly if these parties are held indoors. Because of the profits associated with them they will also inevitably lead to conflict between criminal groups. That has already happened at one of the parties in Surrey. The security guards who are brought in are no more than thugs with Rottweilers, and it is likely that they will attack the police—as they did in Reigate—and, eventually, each other because of their desire to ensure that the massive profits come to them, not to anyone else.

The cost of extra policing to local residents must be borne in mind. When the police seize drugs, the proceeds from them should perhaps be directed back to local police forces instead of being confiscated centrally. That is a wider issue, but one about which my local police force feels strongly.

I support the Bill, confident in the knowledge that Guildford borough council, one of the boroughs in my

constituency, has given me great encouragement. Surrey constabulary, for which I have only the greatest praise, has devised various instructions and ways of trying to prevent these parties from taking place, and has been successful on some occasions. The police have also given me a great deal of information, and if I had had longer I would have used more of it. The important thing is that the Bill should receive a Second Reading, pass through Committee and reach the statute book in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South and of many of his colleagues in the House who thoroughly endorse the Bill.

1.27 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I welcome the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) in introducing the Bill, and I congratulate him on the good use of his opportunity. My hon. Friend, the other sponsors of his Bill and I stress that we are in no way seeking to destroy the fun of young people. I must tell the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) that no one who runs entertainment for young people within the law has anything to fear from the Bill.

I am probably one of the few hon. Members who has experience of promoting entertainment. In a past incarnation I was the chairman of the entertainments committee at Leeds university union, when I had the privilege of promoting some of the biggest names in entertainment, who came and gave concerts at the university. One of my best memories is of handing a cheque to Elton John for £250 for a night's work—a sum that would fill him with horror if he were given it today.

We used to organise concerts for 2,000 people in two halls, with bands playing simultaneously. Artists such as Led Zeppelin, Paul McCartney, the Rolling Stones and Free played at the university. Those of us who are 40 or more and who attended these concerts as undergraduates know the problems involved in them, but we are not trying to prevent young people from enjoying what we enjoyed.

We also recognise that there is a great deal of fun to be had from open air concerts. I well remember the Isle of Wight music festivals and the national jazz and blues festival, which was promoted on racecourses all over the south-east in the late 1960s. They were major events that were enjoyed by many people, including some who are now Members of this place. Of course 20 years have passed.

We know that there is much to be enjoyed at such events. I cannot emphasise too strongly that we are not in the business of destroying young people's fun. On the contrary, we are concerned to protect them in a way that will free them from risk so that they can enjoy the music that they go to hear and the entertainment generally that they seek. The Bill will enable them to do exactly that. It will prevent them also from being exploited by the organisers of some acid house parties. It will stop young people from being damaged by attending them.

The Bill does not do anything that is especially radical. It does not create new offences. Instead, it provides teeth for the existing legislation. It requires all those who run acid house parties to obtain a licence from the local authority. If the organisers break the conditions of the licence, a heavy fine or a sentence of imprisonment will be imposed upon them. If they fail to apply for a licence, they can be fined up to £20,000 or sentenced to six months' imprisonment. That might seem draconian in some respects, but when we consider how acid house parties have been operated over the past few years it is clear that there is a national problem.

Many of the parties have been run in dangerous circumstances. There has been a lack of safety and dangers have faced the attenders, the customers. Major disruption has been caused to the locality in which the parties have taken place. The issue was regarded so strongly by the local authorities which were charged with the responsibility of providing an entertainments licence under the current legislation that they, through the Association of District Councils, wrote to the Home Office in 1988 and called upon the Government to take action. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary have been considering the matter for some time.

I hope that the public will realise that it is not only Conservative local authorities that are calling for action to be taken in respect of the problems that arise from acid house parties. It is an issue that crosses party lines; it is recognised by Labour and Liberal-Democrat local authorities as well as by Conservative authorities. It is recognised that the problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South has rightly identified in a splendid Bill needs to be dealt with urgently.

The most important feature that we have to consider is the protection of the young people who go to acid house parties. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State spoke of a warehouse in Blackburn, Lancashire, where an acid house party took place last month. He told us—this was reported in the press—that there were exit signs over doors which if opened would have led to no fire escape or staircase. Anyone who opened them would have been faced with a huge drop, resulting in death. That is typical. The organisers of acid house parties are using old warehouses, tents in fields or other premises which are often derelict. There are obvious and immediate dangers.

The legitimate promoter of a concert is subject to a series of rules and regulations that bear on numbers, fire safety, electricity and lighting. They relate to a range of matters and they are designed to protect those who attend these events.

At the ad hoc acid house party it is not the organiser who is in danger but the customer and the performers. Promoters have been exploiting those who attend by selling drugs. In a recent case a promoter of an acid house party was sent to prison for 10 years for peddling drugs at the parties.

There is also a problem because of the lack of safety and access to such parties. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) gave a good example of a field being used for a party in his constituency. Suddenly 5,000 young people descended upon it. The cars that brought them blocked the lanes adjacent to the field. If there had been an accident due to lack of adequate fire and safety precautions it would have been impossible for ambulances and fire engines to get through. A legitimate promoter takes safety factors into consideration In addition the local authority issues an entertainment licence for an event and would ensure that there was proper access, but that does not happen in the case of illegal acid house parties.

The local inhabitants of the area surrounding the party are also affected. They are hurt more than any other people and there is nothing that they can do about it. They can call the police but if it is an impromptu party the police will have had little notice of it, and the local authority will

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know nothing about it. Thousands of young people can descend on a site causing noise, traffic congestion and disruption to the local inhabitants.

I speak from personal experience. The location of some of the parties is amazing. A few months ago I went to a housing estate in the middle of Skelmersdale to meet members of the residents' association. They told me that acid house parties were taking place on the estate and they took me to the site of the parties, which was a flat. Hundreds of young people were milling about. It caused disruption, particularly for parents with young children trying to sleep through the noise of traffic. The Bill will ensure that those problems—the noise of traffic and the disruption to people's lives—will be controlled.

I suspect that the major fear of the general public is that the Bill will restrict freedom to party—to use the expression of those who attend—but of course it will not.

The whole House accepts that the promoters of acid house parties or entertainment events of any kind have responsibilities to the public living in the immediate vicinity and to the young people who attend. At the moment the amount of money that can be made by promoters of pay-parties is so enormous that they can afford to pay a fine of £2,000. If one makes thousands of pounds from a party—I am informed from investigations into the matter that many promoters do—£2,000 is just part of the overheads and a small amount, so they can drive a coach and horses through the law and disregard the consequences. The Bill is intended to deal with cowboy operators—the people who do not care about their customers or the inhabitants of the area surrounding the party and are only interested in making vast amounts of money.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West must also bear in mind that, having obtained a licence, a promoter may then completely ignore the local authority's terms and conditions. He will be as guilty of endangering the lives of his customers and the community as an unlicensed acid house party organiser. The law cannot be sterile in that regard; it cannot stand back and do nothing.

A local authority may impose requirements involving exits and gangways, and ban fire hazards such as accumulated rubbish and unsafe electrical equipment. Those of us who remember the Bradford City football ground fire will know how dangerous rubbish can be. A local authority may require the provision of adequate sanitary appliances and proper ventilation and—most important of all—stipulate a maximum number who may attend, and the provision of adequate fire-fighting equipment. Any legitimate licence holder who breaches those requirements must be dealt with as severely as anyone else.

A licence holder making vast amounts of money may ignore important safety provisions precautions because a £2,000 fine is not worth worrying about. That could mean sending many people to their deaths, or at least laying them open to the possibility of injury. Parliament cannot afford to take such an attitude.

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman may be underestimating local authorities' ability to sus out the cowboys. Such people are probably well known to them. In any event, a genuine promoter will know that if he fails in the way that the hon. Gentleman has so eloquently described his chances of obtaining a licence in future will be nil.

Mr. Hind: I take the point. Nevertheless, I believe that my hon. Friend's suggestion of a maximum fine of £20,000, with the option of six months in prison, would constitute a big deterrent for cowboy operators hoping to escape the full force of the law. That is a maximum, however, and would not be used in every instance. I am a lawyer. The maximum penalty that can be imposed by the criminal courts is, I have found, rarely imposed. The court considers the breach of the licence conditions, the circumstances of the breach, the circumstances surrounding that evening's events and then weighs up the seriousness of the breach. A promoter who puts the facts properly before the court and who has acted reasonably will not be in difficulty as a result of my hon. Friend's Bill. Magistrates will realise that he has done his best to stay within the law and they will deal with him accordingly—in contrast to the way in which they will deal with the cowboy operator. A maximum fine of £2,000 is insufficient to deal with potential cowboys who apply for a licence and then completely disregard the conditions attached to it.

If an illegal acid house party takes place, the local authority can issue a licence after the event, to the effect that a statutory nuisance—that of noise—has been committed. However, the nuisance has been committed; it does not help those who suffered as a result of the nuisance to deal with it after the event. Members of the public can prosecute in the magistrates courts, under the noise abatement provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, alleging breach of privacy. They have to prove in court that enjoyment of their property has been disturbed. However, as prosecution takes place after the event, such measures are inadequate. My hon. Friend's Bill would provide local authorities with more powers. They would be able to deal with noise nuisance more forcefully. I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health is considering whether noise at acid house parties is causing damage to health and whether anything can therefore be done to control noise levels at such parties.

We must prevent dishonest promoters of acid house parties from exploiting young people for personal gain. We must ensure that the legislation is strong enough, which it is not at the moment, to deal properly with such people. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) has promised to introduce measures which will lead to the confiscation of profits over £10,000 made at illegal events when the promoters of such events have been found guilty in the courts. That will add to the deterrent provided by my hon. Friend's Bill, and that fact should be made known to the public.

Finally, the legitimate operators of events such as some of the acid house parties that have been promoted for public entertainment will have nothing to fear if they run a legitimate event, ensure that drug dealers will not be there exploiting our young people, prevent any criminal activities from taking place, work with the police on car parking, traffic and nuisance, approach the local authority for a licence and adhere to its conditions. Our young people will then be able safely to enjoy the entertainment that those operators present. The House wishes to encourage operators who provide proper, legitimate

entertainment for our children. We do not wish to encourage people who are interested only in making a quick buck at the expense of our young people and without concern for their safety. The Bill will deal with such people. I commend my hon. Friend's efforts and I hope that all hon. Members will rally round to support it and ensure that it reaches the statute book.

1.50 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I shall intervene only briefly in this important debate. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on his enterprise and good sense in producing the Bill and thank him on behalf of my constituents, because in west Kent we have suffered as severely as any other part of the country from the so-called parties that were held last year.

All hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have referred to the disruption that was caused, which was absolutely acute. The noise disturbance was frankly horrendous, stretching over miles of countryside as a result of the use of amplifiers turned up to sextuple forté so that the sound carried a huge distance. There was any amount of high-powered lighting revolving, blinking and flashing and any amount of traffic. I also received abundant first-hand evidence from parents in my constituency of their teenagers having been approached by people seeking to peddle drugs. Other hon. Members have spoken about the attendant risk of violence to persons, theft and so on. Those occasions are extremely undesirable and I am delighted that the Bill has been introduced.

I wish to refer to one aspect that was not mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. I recognise that it bears on the particular responsibilities of another Government Department, although it relates directly to the issues addressed by the Bill. As we all know, large sums of money are being made out of these occasions. In principle that money is subject to tax. Last year I asked my right hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer what action the Inland Revenue was taking to establish the taxable income being obtained by farmers and landowners allowing their land to be used for such purposes, by those allowing their buildings to be used for such purposes and by the so-called party organisers. Undoubtedly thousands, if not tens of thousands, of pounds are being made as a result of those activities.

I sought an assurance from my right hon. Friend the then Chancellor that the full resources of the Inland Revenue would be applied to make certain that those sums were properly declared in the tax returns of the individuals concerned and would be made fully subject to the tax regime. I received a somewhat po-faced reply to my inquiries. I understand that the Treasury tends to give such replies, particularly on issues concerning people's personal tax liability.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister and the officials in his Department will liaise most closely with Treasury Ministers and Inland Revenue officials. I hope that positive and active steps will be taken to identify the farmers, landowners, building owners and party organisers concerned and ensure that a full declaration of income is made and full liability to tax achieved from the large sums of money which are being coined.

Mr. John Patten: I give an undertaking to my right hon. Friend that I will, at the beginning of the pay-party season —as spring comes, so the numbers of parties will multiply —draw this matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I shall tell him of my right hon. Friend's strong view on the need for the Inland Revenue to take action. I suppose that that feeling is reflected not only in the House but among many ordinary citizens in the country at large.

Sir John Stanley: I ask my right hon. Friend not to defer making representations until the start of the party season. The point I made has equal validity in relation to the past season. I hope that when those concerned complete their tax returns for the financial year 1989-90 —the year we are talking about—the full panoply of the Inland Revenue's investigatory powers will be applied to ensure that full declarations are made and the full amounts of taxation are assessed, on those concerned.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South for allowing me to make this brief intervention, I congratulate him on his Bill and wish him success in carrying it through to receive Royal Assent at the earliest possible date.

1.5 pm

Mr. Bright: With the leave of the House, I shall make a few comments at the end of this lengthy and extremely interesting debate.

I repeat that the Bill is designed not to stop parties, but to make them legal and, therefore, safe for young people to enjoy themselves, and to prevent one person's freedom from interfering with that of another. It is all about balance, as I said earlier.

One hare almost got out—the idea that perhaps the Bill would have some effect on the village fete. I am pleased that outdoor garden fetes, bazaars and other similar entertainments are not required to be licensed as open-air, public, musical entertainment under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, because the music is incidental to them. I hope that will assure vicars, scout masters and women's institute presidents that their fetes are not under threat.

I thank my colleagues in the House, particularly the sponsors, my right hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) for their support and for allowing the Bill to achieve its Second Reading today. I also thank the Home Office staff for their advice and work in helping to draft this difficult and complex Bill. I thank the Essex police for briefing me and giving me the opportunity to see, on the ground, how these parties are organised.

I also thank my staff: my office has been brought to a standstill during the past couple of weeks because of the burden of work on the Bill. I thank Dr. Christopher Thompson, my researcher, who has worked so hard in helping me to draft my speech and briefing me on my various interviews. I paticularly thank my secretary, Barbara Kyriakou without whom I would not have been able to come here today and propose my Bill as I have. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Representation of the People Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.58 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is an unusual occurrence for me because, for the first time in six years, instead of being among my constituents in Birmingham, I have the honour of being here in the House of Commons on a Friday afternoon. It is even more of a shock to my system that I am proposing a Bill that has all-party support, including my own. Still more of a shock to my system is the fact that the Whips have asked me to speak to the Bill. That will not happen very often, any more than will my presence in the House on a Friday.

This simple Bill, which is proposed by me as a complex person, is also laudable and straightforward. Instead of those who are registered to vote having to apply for a vote whenever they move—whether it be for a local election, a by-election or a general election—they would be so registered. The Bill has no implications for public expenditure. The present arrangements have been criticised by all parties equally, by the electoral registration officers and—much more importantly—by the electors themselves because at the moment people cannot vote if they move except by using a cumbersome and unnecessary procedure.

Therefore, I urge the House to adopt this sensible Bill, which will reduce the potential work load on the registration officers, who do an excellent job on behalf of all Members of Parliament. It will also remove a bureaucratic burden from the electorate and—amazingly enough for a Bill of mine—its provisions have been widely welcomed and not criticised by anyone. I shall hang on to that.

2.1 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I wish to support the Bill, and shall speak only briefly because I do not wish to delay our proceedings, and other hon. Members also wish to speak. Any Bill that is entitled "Representation of the People Bill" and that affects the franchise also has an impact on the poll tax. The electoral register and the poll tax are interlinked and overlap. If someone lives in Lambeth and moves to Wandsworth, or vice versa, the Bill would allow that person to exercise his or her franchise rights in local government elections in the area from which they have moved. That is contrary to the provisions of the poll tax legislation. Although that poll tax legislation is based on principles with which I disagree, those principles state that accountablility should operate and that a citizen should pay his or her poll tax money in one specific area and vote within that area. Although I favour this Bill, it cuts across that specific principle.

The electoral register is compiled from the registrations that take place in October. It is then published in February and the rate payments or poll tax payments begin to be payable from the April of that year. Therefore, by February someone could have moved after registering in October. In that entire period, that person could then be entitled to vote in local government elections in another area. That is what the Bill proposes. Indeed, the Bill makes that easier for people and it is, of course, a right to which they should be entitled. Nevertheless, the provisions fall foul of the Government's silly principle about the nature of accountability. They say that under their notion of accountability one is entitled to vote by paying the tax. It should be the other way round. We should have the right to vote as residents living in an area and we should collectively decide our tax arrangements after that.

I could say much more about the inequities of the electoral representation provisions that are hit by this Bill, but other hon. Members wish to speak.

2.3 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I shall be extremely brief. Opposition Members support the Second Reading of the Bill because of the anomalies that crept into the Representation of the People Act 1985. I refer especially to the provisions about absent voters, which affect people who have moved house. It is absurd that the 1985 Act did not simplify the absent voting procedure, especially bearing in mind that those automatic rights existed in the 1983 legislation.

The Opposition regard the Bill as attempting to correct the anomaly of the 1985 Act, the operation of which relies on the discretion of registration and returning officers in deciding whether a person can get to a polling station easily or whether they should have an absent vote.

We support the Bill for two two main reasons. First, we want not only to remove inconvenience for electors but to reduce bureaucracy for returning officers and those who conduct elections. There is nothing partisan about the Bill. The House is merely correcting an error of misjudgment, or perhaps a case of the House of Commons, not doing its job properly. We are attempting to enhance our democracy and the representation of the people of Britain. For that reason, we shall give the Bill as much support as possible to ensure that it receives a Second Reading.

2.5 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It is clear that the whole Chamber welcomes the measure introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). Selly Oak's loss this Friday is the House of Commons' gain and the gain of the electors whose lives will be made easier by the important measure that my hon. Friend has introduced. It has been a most remarkable day for me. I never thought that I would see the day when the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) would publicly support my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. I am glad to have witnessed that remarkable occasion. I shall tell my children and grandchildren about it, but they will probably not believe the tale. I am glad to have been here when the Bill was introduced.

It is a rare pleasure for me as a Minister to have the opportunity to speak on a Bill that is entirely uncontroversial, and which has the full support of all of the major political parties. It is also unusual that its provisions have been welcomed by the various local authority associations representing those who deal with electoral matters. Electors who wish to exercise their democratic rights will be most suited by my hon. Friend's important Bill. Characteristically, his eagle eye has lit on something that the Government and the House had failed to spot—an error which we allowed to creep through in 1985. That is entirely typical of my hon. Friend.

The problem that the Bill addresses is simple. It arises from the way in which the electoral register is prepared each year by reference to a single qualifying date. It is important that people understand the arrangements.

The register comes into force on 16 February following the qualifying date and remains in force for one year. The problem is that a person who has qualified for inclusion on the register by virtue of residence in one electoral area on 10 October, and who subsequently moves house to another electoral area, must wait until the subsequent register comes into force before he or she can vote at elections in the new district or constituency. It is therefore necessary for such people to apply for an absent vote—either a postal vote, or a vote by proxy if they want to continue to vote in their old electoral area.

The problem arises because under the Representation of the People Act 1985 any elector whose circumstance on polling day is or is likely to be such that he or she cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at the allotted station is entitled to an absent vote at that election. At the time we thought that a person who had moved house and was therefore no longer close to the polling station allotted to him on the basis of his qualifying address, would be able conveniently to apply as and when necessary under that provision. But I am afraid to say that an error crept in, which my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak has spotted some five years later.

Unfortunately, under the existing legislation, the elector has to make an application on every occasion on which there is an election. As my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak said, previously one application covered all elections during the remaining life of the register. Understandably, the new arrangement was unpopular with the electors. The difficulty was brought into sharper focus at the 1987 general election. We had a local government election and a general election close to each other. People who had applied for an absent vote at one election thought that that application was extant for both elections. Unfortunately, it was not. People did not have the chance to vote for the party of their choice on that occasion.

The Government, with the agreement of other political parties, looked at this issue and decided to seek all-party support and support from the local authority associations for this change. The Bill will overcome those problems because it provides for people who have moved house during the currency of the register, in future to be able to make a single application for an absent vote at all elections until the new register is in place. It also provides that an application made under the provisions of the Bill will apply not only to parliamentary and European parliamentary elections, but to local government elections. One application will cover local and national franchises, and international franchises within the European Parliament. That seems sensible and we believe that it will be extremely popular with the country.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak said, applications made under the Bill will gain assent from an electoral registration officer provided that the applicant produces evidence of present residence. Applications made under the Bill will not need to be attested and perhaps I should bring that to the attention of the House. Such a requirement would be onerous to the applicant and burdensome to the electoral registration officer. Attestation would serve no useful purpose. Furthermore, it would be unnecessary, as it will be self-evident from an applicant's address whether or not he qualifies.

If an electoral registration officer has any doubts about the bona fides of an application, it can always be checked. It would be illogical to have abandoned attestation for most domestic absent voting applicants, but to retain if for this category of house movers. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that it would add nothing to have an attestation requirement in the Bill. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I have not sought to introduce any amendments to insert such a requirement. It is important that electoral registration officers and others know that that is why we have not sought to introduce an amendment on attestation. It would add nothing to the provisions of the 1985 Act.

The whole House should be extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. If his Bill passes through the House—let us hope that it will pass swiftly—it will simplify the system and reduce the bureaucratic burden on the large number of electors who move house each year. For that reason it will be warmly welcomed by the House and the country. I congratulate my hon. Friend and want him to know that on this occasion the Government fully support him.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Beaumont-Dark.]*

The House divided: Ayes 27, Noes 2.

Division No. 111] **[2.14 pm**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Dykes, Hugh
Favell, Tony
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Janman, Tim
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Maples, John
Nicholls, Patrick
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sims, Roger
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Hind and
Mr. Ian Taylor.

NOES

Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. John Hughes.

It appearing on the report of the Division that fewer than 40 Members had taken part in the Division, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided.*

Bill accordingly committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Entitlement to Employment and Training Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.26 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I intend to speak briefly because I want my Bill, as happened with the two previous Bills, to make progress.

The purpose of my Bill is to provide employment and training for all who have been out of work for two years or more. The Bill would oblige the Secretary of State for Employment, for the first time, to take the necessary steps to tackle the problem of the 400,000 long-term unemployed. Most hon. Members would agree that that is an unacceptable figure; it is bad for our economy, and bad socially.

It is therefore essential that society does something about the long-term unemployed. The time has come for a fresh initiative. That is why I am putting forward this Bill, which will be supported by a package of measures, including counselling, training, Government support schemes and grants to enable employers to take on the long-term unemployed. We need such a package if we are seriously to tackle the problem of the long-term unemployed.

I believe that my Bill offers hope and opportunity to the long-term unemployed. It has the support of more than 100 hon. Members on both sides of the House, including the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), and because of the importance of the subject it deserves a Second Reading.

2.28 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to be called to speak. It has been a long wait, and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) is anxious to speak. If he wants to intervene in my speech, I shall be delighted to give way to him.

This debate is important because it underlines the success that the Government have had in reducing unemployment. Indeed, our record in that respect is the best in Europe. I am pleased that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members are present today to underline that fact. Employment has risen by almost 2 million since 1983. The British economy has created as many jobs as the rest of the European Community put together. That is a record of which to be proud.

I take a considerable interest in these matters in my constituency. Only this month I visited an employment training centre in Gainsborough in which work is being conducted every day of the week to train people for the jobs of the 1990s. The benefit of the reduction in unemployment has been widely spread. It has not been confined to certain types of employment or to particular regions. For instance, long-term unemployment has fallen by about 450,000 in the past two years and is now below 900,000. Unemployment among workers aged under 25 years is now at its lowest level for more than five years.

I commend the Government on the work that they have done in encouraging employment and employment opportunities through training our young people. No Government in the history of our nation have had as good a record in reducing unemployment among our young people and providing training opportunities for the future. I believe——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 16 March.

Private Members' Bills

MARRIAGE (REGISTRATION OF BUILDINGS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): With the authority of the Member whose Bill it is, Friday 16 March.

NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1974 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read—[Queen's Consent signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred until Friday 16 March.

EDUCATION (SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Barnes: (Derbyshire, North-East) On behalf of the Member whose Bill it is, Friday 30 March.

FUEL AND ENERGY PROVISION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 4 May.

UNADOPTED ROADS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

RELIEF OF PLANNING BLIGHT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PLANNING PERMISSION (DEMOLITION OF HOUSES) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [2 March].

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

RADIATION EXPOSED CROWN EMPLOYEES (BENEFITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What day?

Mr. Skinner: On behalf of the Member whose Bill it is, Friday 16 March.

On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order when I have dealt with the Bills.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 16 March.

CAR TELEPHONES (SAFETY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PROTECTION OF BADGER SETTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order 61 (Committal of Bills).

ACCESS TO HEALTH RECORDS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [23 February].

Read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order 61 (Committal of Bills).

GREYHOUND BETTING LEVY BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [16 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Barnes: On behalf of the Member whose Bill it is, Friday 30 March.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Barnes: On behalf of the Member whose Bill it is, Friday 30 March.

REGISTRATION OF COMMERCIAL LOBBYING INTERESTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Barnes: On behalf of the Member whose Bill it is, Friday 30 March.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Capital Allowances Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Point of Order

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you tell us whether the amplifiers are working properly in the Chamber at all times? Can you ascertain whether the amplifiers immediately above the Government Front Bench are working properly? When I tried to move the Second Reading of the Bill that is designed to give compensation to nuclear test veterans, I heard a small, wee voice from the Government Front Bench. I believe that it was the voice of the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick). I think that he should have spoken more loudly so that people throughout his constituency and throughout Britain would know that it was a Minister who objected to the Bill. This is the second week in succession that it has happened. It is high time that the British public knew of the way in which the Government are using——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. This is developing into a speech.

Mr. Skinner *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There was an objection, it was taken, and we followed our customary procedures. Adjournment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is time for the Adjournment motion.

West Kent Water Company

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Patnick.]

2.34 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): Approximately one third of my constituents in Tonbridge and Malling have the singular misfortune to receive their water from the West Kent Water Company. It is a singular misfortune because in the current financial year—1989-90—the West Kent Water Company increased its charges by 42 per cent. That was the largest increase in charge by any statutory water undertaker in England.

Not surprisingly, my constituents and I were outraged at the scale of that increase. Coincidentally, the increase in charge came at the same time as the West Kent Water Company was being bid for by a number of companies. Ultimately the French company SAUR acquired it. No doubt the directors of the West Kent Water Company were seeking to maximise the value of shares in the company and the value of their own shareholdings.

In the West Kent area we were outraged by the 42 per cent. increase and it transpired that my right hon. and learned Friend, the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Minister for water, was outraged by the scale of increase. He told me in several letters that he found the scale of the increase to be quite unjustified. On 23 Februrary last year he wrote to me:

"A few of the companies, West Kent included, have already announced proposals for large price increases in 1989-90—the last year before we plan to introduce the new system of price controls. The Water Companies Association has suggested that price increases of 30 per cent. or more are necessary. I have told the Water Companies Association that their proposals cannot be justified."

My right hon. and learned Friend expressed a clear view, but the message that he gave me and my constituents at around this time last year was pretty depressing, because, while he had acknowledged that 42 per cent. increase was unjustified, he made it quite clear that at that time he had no legal power to intervene. In effect, he was impotent to do anything about the situation. However, he offered us a ray of hope. He said that help was on the way and that the cavalry were coming in the shape of the proposed water legislation, which was in the House of Commons at the time. He told us that that legislation would enable the Secretary of State for the Environment, for the first time, to bring increases in charges made by monopolistic statutory water undertakers under statutory control.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe went further. He made it clear that not merely did the Water Act 1989 give powers to enable the Secretary of State to control price levels of water in future, but that when the Secretary of State for the Environment came to fix price levels for the year 1990-91 and beyond, he would take into account unjustified increases in the previous year.

Bearing the bruises of the 42 per cent. increase, west Kent awaited the announcement of the K factor in the not unreasonable expectation that it would be, at worst, zero—in other words, that the increase would not exceed the rate of inflation. In fact, we hoped that the Secretary of State, bearing in mind this year's 42 per cent. rise, would fix a negative K factor—an increase below the rate of inflation.

On 7 February, the K factor was announced. The news was greeted with dismay in west Kent: instead of announcing one of the lowest K factors in the country, as we had expected, the Secretary of State announced the third highest. The figure for 1990-91 was 20 per cent; even worse, it was the same for the following year.

Moreover, the water company is allowed to add the inflation rate to the K factor. For instance an 8 per cent. inflation rate in 1990-91 would mean a 28 per cent. increase in the charge for the forthcoming financial year, and a 6 per cent. inflation rate in the following year would mean a 26 per cent. increase in the charge for 1991-92. Given that my constituents face a 42 per cent. increase in 1989-90, a 28 per cent. increase in 1990-91 and a 26 per cent. increase in 1991-92, over a three-year period—if my compound arithmetic is correct—they will experience a 130 per cent. increase. As there is no rebate system, they must pay all that out of after-tax income.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may say that the Secretary of State had no alternative if the water company was to make the investment necessary to meet its obligations under the European Community legislation on water standards. If that is the extent of his response, I consider it unsatisfactory. Although I recognise the need to fulfil the European Commission's requirements, I am talking about the implementation of United Kingdom legislation—and not old legislation, but legislation that received Royal Assent only months ago.

It is the Government's responsibility to get legislation right, in terms not only of national policy objectives but of its impact on individuals. If conforming to the EC's water standards means the imposition of unreasonable increases on individuals—which it certainly means in west Kent—it is, in my view, the Government's responsibility to take account of that.

My hon. Friend should consider implementing water standards over a longer transitional period. If that is impossible, he ought to offer a transitional relief scheme to individuals for these charges, just as the Government—and his Department—have introduced a transitional relief scheme for the community charge. The impact of the charges on my constituents in the west Kent area is intolerable and unacceptable.

I am also very unhappy about the handling of the decision by the Department of the Environment. The dialogue that preceded the announcement of the K factor on 7 February was, it seems, exclusively between the Department and the West Kent Water Company. That company has a statutory responsibility, but what about the charge payers and their Members of Parliament? Have their representations been taken into account?

I have pursued that question with Ministers by means of parliamentary questions. Recently I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he took into account, other than those from West Kent Water Company, before he announced his proposals for the K factor on 7 February. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) told me:

"Under section 14(5) of the Water Act 1989 the requirement for the Secretary of State to consider representations before determining a company's initial K factor relates only to representations by the company."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1990; Vol. 168, c. *392*.]

I have studied closely section 14(5) of the Water Act. the word "only" does not appear in that subsection. It does not state that the only representations that should be taken

into account by the Secretary of State are those from the West Kent Water Company. It would be extraordinary and deeply unsatisfactory if the Secretary of State took into account only the representations made by the West Kent Water Company. I hope that the Minister will clarify that important point when he replies to the debate.

The Secretary of State may be misdirecting himself. If he is, his decision-making process is liable to challenge in the courts. Therefore I ask the Minister to clarify whether the Secretary of State will listen only to the West Kent Water Company. Is he deaf to my constituents' representations and to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson)? Is he also deaf to the representations of all hon. Members? Will he take no notice of anybody's representations, other than those of the West Kent Water Company?

I am also concerned about the fact that apart from this decision having been arrived at exclusively by the Secretary of State and the West Kent Water Company, there seems to have been some secrecy, which I cannot accept. I have good reason to believe that the West Kent Water Company sought an even bigger increase than the one that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has announced.

I have sought in parliamentary questions to obtain the figures from Ministers. I have asked about the size of the increase that was sought by the West Kent Water Company. I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment

"what percentage increase in charge for each of the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 was proposed to him by the West Kent Water Company before he announced his proposals for limiting increases in the charges of the statutory water companies in the reply to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) of 7 February."

I received the very disappointing reply from my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside:

"We took account of all representations made by the West Kent Water Company before announcing our proposals for K on 7 February. It would not be appropriate for me to disclose the details of their representations as they were made on a commercial in confidence basis."—[*Official Report*, 26 February 1990; Vol. 168, c. *24*.]

I am familiar with "commercial in confidence" replies. I used them on many occasions as a Minister. I accept that there are perfectly legitimate occasions when that answer can be given. It is entirely legitimate to give that answer when the disclosure of commercial information about the activities of a concern that is in a competitive position would be prejudicial to the commercial activities of that concern. However, we are talking about a statutory monopoly in a totally non-competitive position. My constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks have no alternative whatsoever to getting their water from the West Kent Water Company. There can be no conceivable way in which the commercial interests of the West Kent Water Company or its French controlling shareholders could possibly be prejudiced by revealing to the House the size of the increases for which the West Kent Water Company was asking.

I believe that Ministers are duty bound in their obligations to the House to disclose that information. Therefore, I call upon my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that point and I ask him once again to state the size of the increase that West Kent Water Company asked for prior to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision on 7 February on the K factor for 1990-91 and 1991-92. The House is entitled to that information which should be in the public domain. There is no good reason for the Minister to withhold it. I entirely understand why the West Kent Water Company does not want to disclose that information. That is very simple. It is not ready to face the music locally and in the public domain if the size of the increase it was seeking was put into the public domain. That is the only reason why it is trying to cover its dealing with the Department of the Environment under "commercial in confidence". There is no good reason for Ministers not to disclose what should be disclosed to the House, and I believe that that figure should be disclosed.

In conclusion, we are extremely dissatisfied with the position concerning the West Kent Water Company and its charges. We are dissatisfied with the non-disclosure to the House of the increase sought by the West Kent Water Company. We are extremely unhappy about the way in which, apparently, the only representations being considered are those from the West Kent Water Company to the Secretary of State and we are deeply unhappy about the scale of the increase—28 per cent. next year followed by 26 per cent. the year after, on top of 42 per cent. this year. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, through my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, to consider most carefully what I have said today. I urge him most strongly, before he makes his final determination, to consider my representations and to make sure that his final determination of the K factor is substantially smaller than the one he has proposed.

2.53 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for allowing me to speak and to my hon. Friend the Minister for agreeing to my speaking. I shall be extremely brief.

I, too, am outraged on behalf of my constituents, and myself as a local payer of the charges, at the astonishing increase which has been allowed to the West Kent Water Company. As my right hon. Friend has explained, last year the Minister told me also that his hands were tied. However, he held out the clear expectation that under the legislation his hands would not be tied this year.

My representations on behalf of constituents have also met with scant success. Unless the Minister is able to accede to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling, specifically on coming forward ultimately with a lower K factor than is currently suggested, this legislation—put through so recently and voted through by me and other Conservative Members—is flawed. It does not provide the kind of security and protection for the consumer, in this monopoly situation, that it was intended to provide.

Therefore, this is a test case. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister, in his reply today and also, importantly, in his decision in the next week or two on the ultimate allowance to the West Kent water company, to take into account these representations and what I have said about the legislation.

2.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on securing this debate and making his point so clearly and forcefully. I understand his

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

concern for his constituents and that expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson). I trust that after I have explained a little bit about the background my right hon. Friend will appreciate that his representations were taken into account, although not perhaps by a statutory requirement. I assure him that our desire to reduce the inflation rate gives additional impetus to our concern to allow charges to rise by no more than is absolutely necessary.

I agree that there are significant increases, not just in the areas represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends but elsewhere in the country. The increases are strictly limited to those needed to pay for the improvements in quality and reliability of water supply.

It may be helpful if, in the few minutes allowed me, I give a brief summary of the general method that we have used to set the charges and then address the specific points raised by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The K factor is the adjustment factor added to the retail price index to determine the maximum amount by which charges can rise in any year. Our approach to setting it is set down in section 7 of the Water Act 1989. The Secretary of State must ensure that water undertakers properly carrying out their duties under the Act are able to finance their functions adequately. Subject to that, there is a duty to ensure that customers' interests are protected. We want the customer to get a good service which provides sufficient supplies, meeting drinking water standards, and to get that service at the minimum cost, which also enables the water undertaker to remain financially viable. K factors must, therefore, have regard to the need to provide a reasonable return for the company, the impact of charges on customers and the need to finance improvements.

Sound investment plans were an essential starting point. West Kent and all the other water undertakers were required to prepare investment plans which assessed the present condition of their assets and the expected levels of expenditure over a 20-year period. A comparative efficiency review was then undertaken by the Department's advisers. The financial data obtained from each undertaker, together with an allowance for efficiency savings, its capital expenditure requirements and general economic assumptions were analysed. A number of economic and financial criteria were then used to model K values which enabled the company to finance its functions at lowest cost to the consumer.

Under the provisions of the Water Act 1989, consultation was required. By statute, it is required that, in setting initial K, the Secretary of State should propose K values to the companies and then allow a period of at least 28 days for representations. It may be asked—my right hon. Friend did ask—why we did not consult consumer groups formally. Our main concern had, of course, to be our duties under the Water Act, which required consultation of undertakers, but not consumers. This apart, I assume that the main point which would be made by consumer groups would be the need for the lowest charges consistent with the provisions of a satisfactory service. I think that I can safely assume that that would have been their advice and desire.

As I have already said, we are acutely aware of the need to keep prices down as part of our general drive to contain inflation. However, I can assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that although we were not required by statute to consult consumer groups, nevertheless we listened and had regard to the representations made by people including, in the case of West Kent, my right hon. Friend.

On the more detailed issues, if we had had formally to consult consumer groups, it would have been very difficult to ensure that any consultation would be constructive. To enable them to make a useful contribution, we should have had to provide them with detailed information on individual companies. We could not then promise the companies that we would treat their data as commercial in confidence. That point has been raised by my right hon. Friend, but I must insist that if a company is making information available about its financial strength and similar matters, those matters are properly subject to the commercial in confidence provisions.

Sir John Stanley: My hon. Friend may make that point, but he is not dealing with my central point. His is a perfectly legitimate consideration in relation to a commercial undertaking in a competitive environment, but we are dealing with a statutory monopoly. My hon. Friend must address the subject of his obligations to the House. In my view, he has no legitimate ground for withholding from the House information such as the price increases sought by the West Kent Water Company, which is a statutory monopoly. If he believes that that company's commercial business as a monopoly would have been affected by the disclosure of that information, will he now say in what way the commercial position of the West Kent Water Company, as a statutory monopoly, could conceivably be prejudiced by revealing figures for the increase that it sought?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: They are private companies and, among other things, shares are traded. It is entirely legitimate for them to expect that information provided about, among other things, their commercial strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities should be regarded as commercial in confidence. I must insist on that. Not to have treated their data as commercial in confidence could have jeopardised their commercial position and would certainly have made it impossible to achieve the co-operative working relationship which underlay our scrutiny process. We believe that the process that we followed not only met the requirements of the Water Act but enabled us effectively to protect consumers' interests.

On the point about the 1989 price increase, my right hon. Friend knows that the Water Companies Association in its statement of 5 February last year stated that statutory water companies were likely to raise their charges by 30 per cent. or more. In some quarters, increases of 50 per cent. were expected. That is why the then Minister of State met almost all the chairmen to discuss their proposals and reduced the average proposed increase to about 23 per cent. Consumers were therefore saved at least £16 million in increased charges.

I agree that the previous system of regulation was inadequate to protect the consumer. Sharp increases in one year——

Sir John Stanley *rose*——

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Perhaps my right hon. Friend will allow me to continue as I have only two minutes left and I wish to deal with points that were raised previously.

Sir John Stanley: I should like to correct what my hon. Friend has just said.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Of course.

Sir John Stanley: I should simply like put on the record my hon. Friend's acknowledgement of the fact that the West Kent Water Company proposed an increase of 42 per cent. last year and was not persuaded to reduce that proposed increase by even 1 per cent.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In answer to that, first, we did not have the power to force a reduction in prices. Secondly, the company had already fixed its charges by that time. That is the point that I am seeking to make. Under that previous regime, which has been replaced, we had no power to set prices, but under the system established in the Water Act and now operating we have the ability to protect consumers by setting K factors directly——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at four minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 26 February 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Physics Departments

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which university, university college and polytechnic departments of physics have closed in the last five years; and which such departments are expected to close within the next five years.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected centrally. The future of individual physics departments is a matter for institutions to determine, in consultation with the relevant funding council.

Dyslexia

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the changes in provision for dyslexic children since the Education Act 1981; and if he will make a statement on the effect of these measures on the educational and vocational opportunities of these children.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for LEAs to make appropriate education provision—and to assess its effects—for all pupils in their area including those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, or "specific learning difficulties" as it is also known.

The Government look to LEAs and to schools to ensure that suitable provision is, indeed, made for children with dyslexia, including teaching of reading and writing by methods appropriate to their needs.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures and initiatives have been taken to enable children who were identified as dyslexic at school to pursue and obtain further education and vocational qualifications without being disadvantaged by their difficulties.

Mr. Jackson: As part of their general duty to provide adequate facilities for further education for their area, local education authorities are required to have regard to the requirements of persons with learning difficulties, whether or not dyslexia has been specifically diagnosed. It is open to LEAs to seek information or advice from such bodies as the adult literacy and basic skills unit, which receives Government funding.

Further Education

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of the numbers of students attending *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time courses at colleges of further education for each year since 1985, together with the proportion whose courses were part of the off-job training of an approved YTS.

Mr. Jackson: The information available is as follows:

Numbers of students on further education courses in England

Thousands

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*[1]1988-89*
Full-time	340	347	354	359
of which YTS (per cent.)	6·2	5·2	5·3	5·7
Part-time day	626	648	676	702
of which YTS (per cent.)	14·8	14·9	17·9	17·7
Evening only	596	634	643	694
of which YTS (per cent.)	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·3

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the total allocation to local authorities for capital spending on further education colleges for 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: Allocations made to local education authorities for capital spending on further education colleges for 1990-91 totalled £65 million as follows:

	£ million
Major Building Works[1]	
Committed expenditure[2]	17·2
Starts in 1990-91	32·6
Minor works	6·1
Equipment and Furniture	6·1
Reserve	3·0
Total	65·0

[1] Projects in excess of £200,000.
[2] For DES approved projects which started in earlier years.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide the numbers of students who have taken examinations for further education qualifications in each year since 1985, together with the numbers in each year who had preceded that exam with a course at *(a)* a college of further education, *(b)* a private sector provider, such as a YTS managing agent and *(c)* a course at another public sector establishment, together with the proportion of passes in each case.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is as follows:

Students on Further Education courses in England leading to a specified qualification

	number of students (thousands)
1985-86	944
1986-87	987
1987-88	1,034
[1]1988-89	1,096

[1] Provisional.

Alcohol Research

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the total spending of *(a)* the Medical Research Council and *(b)* the Science and Engineering Research Council on alcohol research involving animals since 1980.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is as follows:

(a) since 1980 the Medical Research Council's expenditure on alcohol research involving animals was £276,000;

(b) alcohol research involving animals is outside the remit of the Science and Engineering Research Council activities and there has therefore been no expenditure.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any estimate of the amount of land available for use as school playing fields; and what information he has on the comparable figures for 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not held by the Department.

Secondary Education, Plymouth

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91, what capital expenditure on projects relating to the reorganisation of secondary education in Plymouth was approved by his Department.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department does not make capital allocations for individual projects at county and voluntary controlled schools. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I have given today to his question about the total sums allocated to Devon for each of these years. It is for Devon LEA to decide how to use the resources available to it in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Education Spending

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91, what was the total sum allocated by his Department to English local education authorities and to Devon county council, respectively.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to capital allocations. The sums allocated in 1988-89 and 1989-90 and the amounts available in annual capital guidelines for 1990-91 are set out in the table. Allocations and annual capital guidelines are not directly comparable. The total for England in 1988-89 includes additional capital allocations which were mainly targeted at inner city areas. Each local education authority's annual capital guideline reflects the extent to which its plans for spending on schools and colleges matched the national priorities of providing new places in areas of population growth, cost-effective schemes for the removal of surplus places, continuing to remedy deficiencies in existing school buildings and new major building projects at colleges. In each of these years Devon's allocation as a percentage of its plans was above the national average.

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
England	386,700	352,000	485,000
Devon	8,434	14,177	12,984

Notes: Figures are in cash terms and in thousands.

Capital Project Bids

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90, and 1990-91, what were the total bids for capital projects by English local education authorities and by Devon county council, respectively.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested about local education authority plans for capital expenditure is as follows:

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
England	952,630	1,032,489	1,326,529
Devon	10,732	23,329	28,679

Note: Figures are in cash terms and in thousands.

Student Loans

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to publish additional information on the working of the student loans scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: I am today making available, and have placed in the Library, a note which sets out detailed rules and procedures for the operation of the scheme. I intended to do so, following undertakings given by my hon. Friend in Committee, as soon as I had held discussions with representatives of the higher education institutions. While some details remain to be finally settled, I think it right to publish this material now.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sri Lanka

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, by type and by value at 1990 prices, what aid has been given, in each of the last five years, to Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Chalker: The following are the figures requested. Further details are contained in ODA's publication "British Aid Statistics" which is in the House of Commons Library:

Gross bilateral aid to Sri Lanka 1984-1988 in constant 1990 prices

£ thousand

Year	*Gross Bilateral aid*	*Total Financial aid*	*ODA project aid (excluding ATP)*	*of which ATP*	*CDC project aid*	*Total technical cooperation*
1984	35,980	32,827	22,159	3,839	4,633	3,153
1985	22,509	18,777	7,964	595	8,150	3,732
1986	20,065	15,417	48	9,800	3,259	4,648
1987	22,388	16,768	—	6,296	8,551	5,620
1988[1]	24,400	16,063	5,725	5,064	3,433	8,336

[1] Also includes debt relief and disaster relief.

Source: British aid statistics.

WALES

Waste Disposal

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to evaluate the levels of toxic waste pollution, and constituent pollutants, contained at sites in Tythegston, Llanwern and Plantation lane, Newtown.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office study of contaminated land identified possible toxic waste sites including Tythegston and Llanwern, and provided an assessment of the toxicity of each. The information available indicated that the Plantation lane site at Newtown contained only domestic waste.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the major waste tip removal schemes either earmarked or under way in the counties of Gwent, Mid Glamorgan, West Glamorgan, Dyfed and Powys.

Mr. Grist: As part of the land reclamation programme the Welsh Development Agency is responsible for reclaiming waste tips. It is extremely rare for such tips to be completely removed: they are usually reduced in height and reprofiled, with excess material accommodated within the derelict site or on adjoining land. The number of projects involving the reclamation (not removal) of waste tips currently in progress and in the Welsh Development Agency's programme of future work is as follows:

Welsh Development Agency funded waste tip projects

County	*In progress*	*In programme*
Dyfed	—	8
Gwent	3	14
Mid Glamorgan	5	38
Powys	—	7
West Glamorgan	1	9
Total	9	76

Rural Unemployment

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give consideration to the compilation of statistics covering Wales along the lines of the estimates produced by the English Rural Development Commission of rural unemployment in England.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are no plans to produce such estimates. Unemployment rates are available for all travel-to-work and county areas in Wales but these areas are not categorised as rural or urban.

Drugs and Medicines

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give statistics on a county basis of the volume and type of drugs and medicines returned in Wales to pharmacist and other agencies in response to campaigns launched by the Government and area health authorities;

(2) if he will give, by volume and method, the costs of the disposal of the most prolific of the drugs and medicines returned to pharmacists by patients in response to campaigns launched by the Government and area health authorities.

Mr. Grist: Past campaigns have been organised at local level and detailed information is not readily available centrally.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what funds will be made available to help Welsh pharmacies to dispose of medicines returned by patients in response to campaigns launched by the Government and area health authorities to reduce the amount of dangerous medicines held beyond their useful dates;

(2) what means of disposal have been suggested by the Welsh Office as the best practicable method of destroying medicines returned by patients to pharmacists in response to campaigns launched by the Government and area health authorities.

Mr. Grist: These matters are currently being considered by a working group of the Welsh pharmaceutical committee. I will write to the hon. Gentleman when I have considered any proposals which may be put to me by the committee.

School Sports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake a survey of school sports in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We expect to publish shortly a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of a survey of physical education in the secondary schools of Wales.

General Practitioners

Mr Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of electoral wards in Wales which will qualify for deprivation payments to general practitioners; if he will indicate the Jarman index score for each one; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The details of these issues have yet to be finalised. FPCs and the profession will be notified as soon as possible.

Treatment Centres

Mr Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, after implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, payment for care at a treatment centre will continue to be paid for out of a central fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The costs of treatment centres will continue to be met centrally after the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. The Department is considering how this will be achieved most effectively under the new arrangements.

River Severn

Mr Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has proposals to improve the standards of maintenance on the banks of the River Severn in Montgomeryshire to avoid further land erosion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Maintenance of river banks to protect against erosion is the responsibility of their owners.

Deeside Community Hospital

Mr Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of the building of the Deeside community hospital:

(2) when he expects the completion of phase I of the Deeside community hospital.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for the Deeside community hospital scheme rests with the Clwyd health authority. We understand that construction work on phase I is currently on target for completion in December 1991.

Roof Tax

Mr Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the economic consequences of the introduction of a roof tax in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already said, the principal disadvantages of such a tax include its unfair and arbitrary impact on homeowners and tenants, its discouragement of home improvements and the lack of any clear link between the spending of a local authority and the size of an individual's tax bill.

PRIME MINISTER

Accountancy and Audits

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to use normal commercial accountancy and audit methods in all public sector departments.

The Prime Minister: Commercial accountancy and auditing methods have been or will be introduced in Government Departments where it is considered appropriate to use them. But as my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury explained in *Official Report*, 22 January 1990, column *540*, normally only cash-based appropriation accounts will be published for Departments or parts of Departments which do not become next steps agencies.

Soviet Union

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she has recently met representatives of the Adam Smith Institute, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute of Economic Affairs to discuss the promotion of free market democracy in the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: No. But we are actively supporting moves towards genuine democracy and a market economy in the Soviet Union.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list each category of parliamentary questions which it is her policy not to answer.

The Prime Minister: Of those questions not transferred, none.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library the letter written to Mr. Colin Wallace by Mr. Charles Powell on 16 February.

The Prime Minister: No.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government in relation to the treaty revision proposal which the Foreign Affairs Council agreed on 5 February should be submitted to the European Council on amendments to the treaty in relation to the final phases of European monetary union; and if she will seek to clarify the implications for the United Kingdom of the treaty proposal before the meeting of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: The Foreign Affairs Council on 5 February concluded that the Irish Government should table a treaty revision proposal, based on the relevant conclusions of the Strasbourg European Council. The opinion of the European Parliament is required on the question of convening an IGC under article 236 of the treaty of Rome. This was a procedural technicality to put into effect the Strasbourg presidency conclusions.

The President of the European Council at Strasbourg noted that the necessary majority existed to convene a conference charged with preparing an amendment of the treaty with a view to the final stages of EMU. The Government have made it clear we believe that the convening of the IGC was premature, but that we will nevertheless participate in it.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to ensure that Parliament is fully advised of the outcome of meetings of the various Councils of Ministers; and if she will make a further statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 5 February.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will be aware that it is normal practice for the outcome of meetings of the Council of Ministers to be reported promptly to the House.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *716-17*, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which gave a full report on the meeting to which my hon. Friend refers.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

General Synod

66. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church Commissioners spent on the General Synod and its activities in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners do not fund the General Synod.

Primary Schools (Wavertree)

67. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if Church funding will be available to maintain the three Anglican primary schools in Wavertree, Liverpool.

Mr. Alison: None of the commissioners' funds are, by law, available for school purposes. I cannot speak for any other Church of England body which might be involved.

Redundant Churches

68. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church Commissioners intend to make any redundant churches available for civil marriages under the recent White Paper proposals.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners will wish to consider the implications of the White Paper in consultation with the redundant churches fund and others concerned in the Church before coming to any conclusion.

"Living Faith in the City"

69. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what consideration the commissioners have given or plan to give to the recently published Church of England report "Living Faith in the City".

Mr. Alison: The commissioners are studying "Living Faith in the City" with interest and have already noted its positive comments on the commissioners' involvement in the urban priority areas.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Energy Production

83. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will express in coal tonne equivalents the amount of energy required to generate £1,000 of gross domestic product in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The amount of energy required to generate £1,000 of gross domestic product for 1987, the latest period for which comparable figures exist, for *(a)* the United Kingdom is 0·85 tonnes of coal equivalent, *(b)* the European Community as a whole, is 0·8 tonnes of coal equivalent.

These figures have been derived by expressing the gross inland energy consumption as a proportion of the gross domestic product measured in market prices. The gross domestic product for the United Kingdom and the European Community as a whole were calculated using purchasing power standards for comparison purposes. Further details on the definition of the gross domestic product used are given in the Eurostat publication "National Accounts ESA".

Taxation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the categories of income tax payers for whom the average percentage burden of total taxation is higher now than in 1979.

Mr. Lilley: Since income tax rates have been reduced and the main personal allowances increased by substantially more than the rate of inflation, taxpayers will now pay a lower proportion of their income in tax than in 1978-79 unless their incomes have risen even more rapidly than allowances. Average earnings have risen rather more than this. For taxpayers of working age whose incomes have increased in line with average earnings, average rates of income tax are lower for everyone except some married men with earnings of less than three quarters of average earnings. None the less, on the same basis, real take-home pay is higher than in 1978-79 at all levels of earnings.

Payroll Giving

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people participated in the payroll giving scheme in each year of the scheme's existence; what total sums were given to charities as a result of the scheme in each year; and what was the cost to the Exchequer in each year.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates are as follows:

	Payroll giving scheme		
	Donors (thousands)	*Donations (£ million)*	*Cost of tax relief (£ million)*
1987-88	55	1·0	0·3
1988-89[1]	125	3·5	1·0
1989-90[1]	175	7·0	2·0

[1] Provisional.

Independent Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost of independent taxation in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 8 January at column 566 for the effect on receipts in 1990-91. The corresponding reduction in income tax receipts in 1991-92 is estimated to be £1·3 billion. The estimate includes the effect on the composite rate of tax on bank and building society interest in 1991-92, but makes no allowance for possible behavioural effects. The reduction in capital gains tax receipts in 1991-92 is tentatively estimated to be about £50 million.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was raised by local authorities in rates in each year since 1979; and what increase in income tax would have raised an equivalent sum at constant prices.

Mr. Lilley: The amount raised in total local authority rates in each year since 1978-79 is as follows:

	£ billion	*£ billion at 1989-90 prices*[1]
1978-89	5·8	13·6
1979-80	6·8	13·8
1980-81	8·7	14·9
1981-82	10·7	16·6
1982-83	12·1	17·5
1983-84	12·3	16·9
1984-85	13·0	17·0
1985-86	13·9	17·3
1986-87	15·7	19·0
1987-88	17·1	19·7
1988-89	18·9	20·2

[1] Cash figures adjusted to 1989-90 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

In 1988-89 an extra 10p on both the basic and higher rates of income tax is estimated to have a direct yield of about £19 billion. This estimate ignores behavioural effects which would probably be significant.

Non-industrial Staff

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the changes in numbers in central Government non-industrial staff in each year since 1979 and *(b)* comparable figures for local government, broken down by county and district.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The numbers of central Government non-industrial staff, on a full-time equivalent basis, in post as at 1 July are as follows:

	Thousands
1979	560·2
1980	544·9
1981	537·1
1982	523·2
1983	514·8
1984	500·9
1985	496·0
1986	501·8
1987	507·7
1988	504·6
1989	498·9

In respect of local government, information in the form and detail apparently requested could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. Employment information which is readily available, for each county and district in England, is in terms of headcount, and is given for the latest period and a year earlier in quarterly press notices issued on behalf of the joint staffing watch through the Department of the Environment. Copies of these press notices and similar joint staffing watch data for Scotland and Wales are available in the Library. Figures of total local authority employment at mid-year are contained in the article on employment in the public and private sector, published in the December 1989 edition of *Economic Trends*.

Age Allowances

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance the Inland Revenue issues to local officers on how to award pensioners' age allowances; what arrangements are in place to ensure consistency in treatment of such allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue issues guidance to local offices on all aspects of the income tax system. The guidance is aimed at producing consistency of treatment in applying the relevant legislation. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, I shall be happy to look into it if he will let me have details.

VAT

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there have been any changes concerning the regulations covering the levying of value added tax upon share dealing in the London market.

Mr. Ryder: The Value Added Tax (Finance, Health and Welfare) Order 1989 (SI 1989/2272) exempted from VAT with effect from 1 January 1990 the making of arrangements for or the underwriting of transactions in securities. The order implemented the requirements of article 1(1) of Council directive 89/465/EEC (OJ No. L226, 3.8.89, p.21).

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing to one place of decimals for each year since 1978 the share of gross domestic product accounted for by the items covered in the retail prices index.

Mr. Ryder: The data are not readily available in the form requested. There are in any case substantial differences in definition and coverage between gross domestic product and the household expenditure represented in the retail prices index.

Mortgages

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in tabular form, and at constant prices, the amounts which would be payable each month *(a)* at current interest rates and *(b)* at the lowest interest rate achieved since June 1987, on a standard repayment mortgage repayable over 25 years of each of the regional average mortgages listed in his answer of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *518*.

Mr. Lilley: The monthly interest payments for average new mortgages in each year, after deduction of basic rate tax relief, are given in the table. They are based on the current 14·5 per cent. mortgage interest rate and on the 9·8 per cent. rate which existed in June 1988.

Region	*Average new mortgage* £	*Monthly payment*[1] *9·8 per cent. interest rate* £	*14·5 per cent. interest rate* £
Northern	28,400	173·95	257·38
Yorkshire and Humberside	29,600	181·30	268·25
East Midlands	34,700	222·13	328·67
East Anglia	44,600	302·98	448·29
Greater London	60,900	436·10	645·25
South East	53,200	373·22	552·21
South West	43,700	295·63	437·42
West Midlands	33,800	214·78	317·79
North West	31,300	194·37	287·58
Wales	30,200	185·38	274·29
Scotland	26,500	162·31	240·16
Northern Ireland	24,200	148·23	219·31
United Kingdom	38,300	251·53	372·17

[1] Assuming endowment mortgage.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total loss or gain to the average mortgagor claiming mortgage interest relief resulting from changes since the 1988 Budget in *(a)* direct taxation, *(b)* increases in the rate of interest on mortgages and *(c)* interest payments net of mortgage tax relief.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 February 1990]:* The average outstanding mortgage in 1987-88 was £17,000. The table compares the income tax and NIC payments and mortgage interest payments on a mortgage of £17,000 for a married man with a gross income of £18,000, the average for a mortgagor in 1989-90, under (i) the tax and NIC rates

and allowances and the mortgage interest rate of 1987-88 with allowances indexed to 1989-90 levels and (ii) the rates, allowances etc actually in force in 1989-90. The comparison ignores any repayment of capital there may have been between 1987-88 and 1989-90.

£ per year

	[1]*1987-88*	*1989-90*	*Change*
Income tax and NIC[2]	5,246	4,771	−475
Mortgage interest payment net of tax relief	1,378	1,772	+394

[1] After indexation.

[2] Before relief due under MIRAS and assuming that the income is all earned and that the wife has no earnings, that no allowances or reliefs are available other than the married man's allowance, that the man is contracted into SERPS, and that the post-October 1989 NIC rates and limits apply for 1989-90.

Note: Assuming average mortgage interest rates of 11·1 per cent. for 1987-88 and 13·9 per cent. for 1989-90.

Credit Cards

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he holds on *(a)* the number of cheque guarantee cards and credit cards presently in circulation and *(b)* those cheque guarantee cards which can also be used as credit cards.

Mr. Ryder: Data are not collected centrally in the form requested.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to introduce proposals to prevent banks from operating cheque guarantee card systems when, irrespective of their customers' wishes, those cards also operate as credit cards.

Mr. Ryder: It is a matter for a bank's commercial judgment whether it offers its customer a package which includes a combined credit and cheque guarantee card. However, under section 51 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974, it is an offence to give a person a credit card if he has not asked for it.

Tax Appeals

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Board of Inland Revenue's practice in seeking a taxpayer's agreement that an appeal to the special commissioners should be heard instead by the general commissioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Board of Inland Revenue is publishing today, with my approval, a press release explaining when and in what circumstances an inspector may seek a taxpayer's agreement (or failing that a direction by the general commissioners) that an election for an appeal to be heard by the special commissioners should be disregarded.

In deciding when the appeal should be listed for hearing, inspectors of taxes are to treat appeals to the special commissioners no differently from appeals to the general commissioners. Inspectors are only to ask taxpayers to agree that an election for hearing by the special commissioners should be disregarded when a decision is needed to arrange the listing, and then only where the inspector is satisfied that it is a delay appeal as opposed to a contentious appeal.

Benefits (Tax)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total gross figure of P11D benefits on which income tax is charged for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* The taxable value of P11D benefits in 1989-90 is estimated to be £4·4 billion. This estimate is based on projections from data relating to 1987-88 and is provisional.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nepal

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations since 1 February regarding human rights abuses in Nepal, and in particular the suppression of opposition parties.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have received a number of representations, but none has referred to the position of opposition parties in Nepal.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Nepal about human rights.

Mr. Sainsbury: My noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office discussed human rights issues with both the Nepalese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister during his visit to Kathmandu last week.

EC Treaty Revision

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the formal treaty revision which the Foreign Affairs Council of 5 February agreed to propose through the agency of the Irish Government will be subject to majority vote; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: All amendments to the treaty of Rome must be agreed unanimously by member states and ratified by national Parliaments. The discussion at the FAC on 5 February was on a procedural technicality to put into effect the Strasbourg presidency conclusions on convening an intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *717*, why the Foreign Affairs Council on 5 February agreed that the Irish Government should table a formal treaty revision proposal; what is the general purpose of the proposed treaty provision; and if he agreed to the proposed treaty revision proposal on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Maude: The Foreign Affairs Council on 5 February considered the procedural technicalities required to give effect to the relevant conclusions of the Strasbourg European Council, in particular the requirement to obtain an opinion from the European Parliament.

The President of the European Council at Strasbourg noted that the necessary majority existed to convene a

conference charged with preparing an amendment of the treaty with a view to the final stages of EMU. We have made it clear that, though we believe the convening of the intergovernmental conference was premature, we will nevertheless participate in it.

Turkey

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Turkey with regard to the denial of human rights to Armenians within that country: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We regularly remind the Turkish Government of our expectation that they will respect the human rights of all people in Turkey. The Foreign Secretary did this most recently with Mr. Bozer, when he was in London shortly before his recent appointment as Foreign Minister.

Hong Kong

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many persons have left Hong Kong over the most recent 12 months for which figures are available: and if he has any record of the nations to which they have moved.

Mr. Maude: The Hong Kong Government estimate that about 42,000 people left the territory during the calendar year 1989. Of these, some 95 per cent. went to the four most popular destination countries which are Canada, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand.

EC Treaties

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *327*, if the reservation by Her Majesty's Government to act on their own if necessary relates to measures enacted under the Community treaties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Legislation can be modified or amendment only by the body that enacted it.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will bring forward legislation to protect small investors and the creditors of companies who relied on the reports of negligent auditors on the same terms as loan creditors who rely on their own commissioned accountant's reports;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to make auditors liable in negligence to third parties who rely on their published accounts to make investment decisions.

Mr. Redwood: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the number of instances when his Department has noted disclosure of an auditor's shareholding in a company.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not collected. Ethical guidance issued by the professional accountancy bodies advises auditors generally not to hold shares in audit clients except in given circumstances.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many instances his Department has noted loans made by auditors to their clients.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not collected. Ethical guidance issued by the professional accountancy bodies advises accountancy practices not to make loans to clients.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the rate at which audit fees for large companies have been rising.

Mr. Redwood: Information about audit fees is not collected.

Ferranti

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what letters he has received from investors, directors or others commenting on the role of Peat Marwick in the Ferranti affair.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whether, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 8 January, *Official Report*, column *518*, he will provide details of *(a)* the investigations and *(b)* the inspectors which have come from the accountancy firms criticised by the joint disciplinary scheme.

Mr. Redwood: Publicly announced appointments under the Companies Act of inspectors from accountancy firms which have been criticised previously by the joint disciplinary scheme are as follows:

Name of company	*Firm of accountants*	*Inspector*
Milbury plc	Grant Thornton	Mr. M. G. Lickiss
Westminster Property Group		
County NatWest Limited	Grant Thornton	Mr. D. L. Spence
County NatWest Securities Limited		
Blue Arrow plc	Grant Thornton	Mr. M. D. Boohan
House of Fraser Holdings plc	Robson Rhodes	Mr. H. G. C. Aldous
The Bestwood plc Atlanta Fund Managers Limited	Robson Rhodes	Mr. J. Venning

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those inspectors' reports completed since 1979 which remain unpublished.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

Company Name	*Date of Report*
Intervestor SA	31 August 1979
Elliott Group of Peterborough Limited	[1]25 September 1979 [2]16 October 1980
Helmville Limited	13 November 1979

Company Name	Date of Report
Wilson-Mandleberg Limited	30 April 1980
Brush Aggregates Limited	30 June 1980
Parsons, Sherwin and Company Limited	03 July 1980
Andromeda Electronics Limited	01 September 1980
Reliance Plastering Limited	04 September 1980
Alarmount Properties Limited	27 November 1980
Portcarne Holdings Limited	
Mancrest Limited	
H. & C. Davis Company Limited	[2]23 December 1980
Dunlop Holdings Limited	[3]10 March 1981
	[2]12 November 1981
Metalman Engineering Limited	15 May 1981
Brymore (Steels) Limited	15 May 1981
Phoenix Shipbuilders Limited	25 May 1982
Allied Suppliers (Ireland) Limited	29 April 1983
Hartley Baird plc	21 December 1983
Riafield Limited	30 December 1983
Cubar Construction Co. Limited	28 August 1984
Euroseas Securities Limited	5 March 1985
	[1]30 December 1985
Alexander Howden Group plc	[2]26 June 1987
Hartley Baird plc	23 May 1986
Pharmaceutex (IV Fluid) Limited	4 June 1986
Drivehouse Limited	
Furdrove Limited	
Corporate Management Planning Limited	24 September 1986
British Anzani plc	28 November 1986
Euroflame Holdings plc	27 June 1987
Medway Secondary Metals Limited	21 October 1987
House of Fraser Holdings plc	23 July 1988
Signal Life Assurance Co. Limited	16 November 1988
Guinness plc	[1]24 November 1988
Aldermanbury Trust plc	[1]20 December 1988
	[1]13 January 1989
Consolidated Gold Fields plc	[1]5 April 1989
Graylaw Holdings Limited	28 November 1989
Link Service Stations Limited	
Bank Street Securities Limited	28 November 1989
Pennine Commercial Holdings plc	[1]28 November 1989
The Animal Defence Society Limited	31 December 1989
Minet Holdings plc	[2]16 January 1990
WMD Underwriting Agencies Limited	[4]24 July 1986

[1] Interim.
[2] Final.
[3] Second interim.
[4] Interim published.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the costs associated with each of the inspectors' reports published in 1988-89.

Mr. Redwood: The inspectors' reports published during 1988-89 with their costs are as follows:

Name of Company	Date of Publication	Cost £
Emray plc (Now Equity and General plc)	5 May 1988	23,993
Milbury plc Westminster Property Group Limited	27 October 1988	1,136,065
Sumrie Clothes plc (Now Summer International plc)	14 December 1988	58,101
Bremner plc	7 June 1989	153,156
County NatWest Limited County NatWest Securities Limited	20 July 1989	1,088,880
Consolidated Gold Fields plc	6 September 1989	150,771

One of the Emray inspectors was a departmental officer whose cost is not separately identifiable. The report on The Greenbank Trust plc was published on 5 August 1988. The inspectors were departmental officers and the costs of the inspection are not available.

Fire Retardant

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about impregnation with fire retardant of babies' accessories and the linings of prams, pushchairs and cots.

Mr. Forth: I have received a number of representations from suppliers of nursery furniture regarding fire retardant treatments for cover fabric.

The fire resistance of nursery furniture was the subject of full consultations in the context of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 and the 1989 amendment regulations.

These regulations require that from 1 September 1990 most types of covers on nursery furniture (except baby nests) must pass the match test. The required level of fire resistance can be achieved by alternatives to the use of fire-retardant chemicals. These include the use of certain natural fabrics such as cotton over a fire resistant interliner, or the use of inherently match resistant fabrics.

Overseas Companies

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many overseas companies have set up operation in Britain in the past year.

Mr. Redwood: An analysis by country of incorporation of all companies which are incorporated outside Great Britain but have, in 1988-89, established a place of business here and register documents under part XXIII of the Companies Act 1985, is contained in table G1 of the "Companies in 1988-89", a copy of which is in the Library. The number of overseas companies having subsidiaries here which were incorporated in the past year is not known.

Company Policies

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies employing more than 250 people have included in their annual reports a description of their actions to keep the employees informed on company policies and arrangements of their income, according to section 1 of the Employment Act 1982, for each year since 1983.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not available. Companies House staff carry out certain basic checks on accounts, but the contents are not scrutinised in detail except in response to specific complaints.

Takeovers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to analyse and identify the obstacles to company takeovers in other member states of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Department of Trade and Industry commissioned a report from Coopers and Lybrand in 1989 on barriers to takeovers in the European Community. This contains an inventory of the barriers that exist and an

assessment of their relative importance. The Department has also published a consultation document on barriers in the Community which summarises the principal barriers and the way they operate.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last visited the National Engineering Laboratory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I visited the National Engineering Laboratory in 1971 when I was last a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will tabulate, by type and value, at 1990 prices the trade between Britain and Sri Lanka for each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: Information on United Kingdom trade with individual countries is published in tables ii (imports) and v (exports) of Business Monitor MM20 "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library.

Investment Services Directive

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what he expects to be the content of the proposed investment services directive; and when he expects that directive to be published.

Mr. Redwood: The draft investment services directive sets key standards for the authorisation of investment firms within the EC. It provides a "single passport" for an investment firm so that, once authorised in its home state, it can carry on investment business throughout the EC without the need for further authorisation.

The directive contains provisions relating to the prudential supervision of investment firms. It sets out the responsibilities of home and host member states. Most conduct of business rules remain a matter for host state authorities. The directive contains provisions liberalising access to stock exchanges and other organised securities markets in the EC. It provides for co-operation beween regulators and also contains reciprocity provisions covering relations with third countries.

The Commission submitted a text of the directive to the Council of Ministers on 3 January 1989, which was published in *Official Journal* No. C43 on 22 February 1989. The Commission submitted a revised text to the Council on 12 February 1990. This text has not yet been published in the *Official Journal*.

Fireworks

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to put stricter controls over the purchase and use of fireworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No. I believe that the right policy is to enforce rigorously the existing law against abusing fireworks, to educate the public to treat them with respect, and to check for safety any fireworks that do not comply with the new British standard.

Accountants

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made towards establishing the new arrangements for the making and supporting of accounting standards.

Mr. Redwood: In October I announced that Sir Ronald Dearing had agreed to become chairman-designate of the Financial Reporting Council. His task was to negotiate terms with all concerned so that the new arrangements for making and enforcing accounting standards were in place in the summer. Sir Ronald has reported to me and the Governor of the Bank of England that he has established a firm basis on which to proceed to full implementation of the new arrangements. In particular he has received satisfactory assurances of the initial funding from the Consultative Committee of Accounting Bodies (CCAB), the International Stock Exchange (ISE), and the Bank of England on behalf of the banking community. I have told Sir Ronald that my Department will also be making a contribution of about one third of the costs to be incurred. The proposed budget not only covers the costs of the envisaged activities of the Financial Reporting Council and the Accounting Standards Board but includes a substantial provision for legal expenses by the review panel in the event of contested procedings on defective accounts.

Sir Ronald has drawn up detailed proposals for the constitution of the new bodies. The chairman of the Financial Reporting Council will be supported by three deputy chairmen, and together the four will constitute an executive body responsible for finance and appointments. The deputy chairman, like the chairman, will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry acting jointly with the Governor of the Bank of England and will be senior representatives of the accountancy profession, the world of business and the financial community. On Sir Ronald's recommendation, and with the governor's agreement, I have asked Mr. Philip Couse (chairman CCAB), Sir Trevor Holdsworth (president CBI) and Mr. Andrew Hugh Smith (chairman ISE) to serve as deputy chairmen-designate, and I am delighted to say that they have agreed to do so. Formal appointments will be made when the Financial Reporting Council is established. In the meantime the group will give priority to indentifying the first chairman of the Accounting Standards Board.

It is a considerable achievement to have concluded the necessary consultations and developed detailed proposals in so short a time, and I congratulate Sir Ronald on the excellent progress he has made. I have asked him to proceed without delay to implement the proposals so that the new arrangements are ready to take over from the present Accounting Standards Committee on 1 August.

Estate Agents

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will extend the consumer protection provisions of the Trades Description Act to estate agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 20 February at column *607*.

ENVIRONMENT

British Waterways Board

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his response to the Environment Select Committee's report on the working of the British Waterways Board.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 6 February at column *584*.

Councillors' Allowances

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the local authority budgets for 1990-91 covering councillors' allowances will be based upon the present system of remuneration until he makes a decision on the introduction of a new system of councillors' allowances.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Until the regulations under section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 for the new system of remuneration for councillors come into force, the present system continues.

Endangered Species

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions an application for an import licence under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 has been refused on the ground that an animal is unlikely to survive for any appreciable time if it is kept in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has no record of the number of import applications which have been refused on these grounds.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken, or proposes to take, to implement the resolution passed at the seventh meeting of the conference parties of CITES in Lausanne in 1989 regarding the transport of live animals checklist scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given to him on 29 January 1990 at column *68*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria for assessing, in relation to the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976, whether an animal is unlikely to survive for any appreciable time if it is kept in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: Our scientific advisers, the Nature Conservancy Council, has provided us with a list of species which generally do not survive well in captivity, except in specialist hands. This list was compiled by a committee of experts following consultation with various non-governmental bodies.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what conveniently available figures he has for the annual cost to his Department of administering Council regulation EEC 3626/82; and what proportion of this cost is borne by the importers;

(2) what is the approximate annual cost to his Department of administering the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976; and what proportion of this cost is borne by the importers.

Mr. Trippier: We estimate that the cost to the Department in 1989-90 of administering Council regulation EEC 3626/82 will be £487,000. The cost of administering the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act was approximately £123,000. None of these costs is borne by the importers.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where it is shown that the welfare aspects included in article 4, section 2(c) of convention on the international trade in endangered species in wild fauna and flora have not been met, what representations are made to the CITES secretariat, or the exporting country, to ensure they are met in the future.

Mr. Trippier: When serious deficiencies in the transport of live animals come to light, they are taken up with the veterinary authorities of the exporting country. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 20 December, *Official Report*, at column *350*.

Community Charge

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what definition of a full-time student he applies in respect of eligibility for the community charge rebate for students.

Mr. David Hunt: The eligibility criteria for the student relief are set out in the Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/443). Advice to charging authorities on the application of these regulations is contained in community charge practice note No. 23, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are given to local authorities administering the community charge, concerning the savings which *(a)* a married couple, *(b)* partners cohabiting and *(c)* single people may have before the £8,000 threshold is applied; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The housing benefit guidance manual (chapter 6), together with the community charge benefit guidance manual, provides local authorities with detailed guidance on the assessment of capital for married and unmarried partners, and for single claimants. Copies of both manuals are in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each standard spending assessment element used to calculate the standard spending assessment of Tonbridge and Malling borough council in 1990-91, stating the amount of standard spending assessment attributed to each element.

Mr. David Hunt: The elements of the standard spending assessment for Tonbridge and Malling are as follows:

	£ million
Other services	5·364
Capital financing	0·466
Total	5·830

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figures he used for calculating the revenue support grant entitlement of Tonbridge and Malling borough council in 1990 in accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the revenue support grant distribution report (England) for *(a)* standard spending assessment for the area of the receiving authority, *(b)* DA per adult, *(c)* CCSS, *(d)* relevant population, *(e)* distributable amount, *(f)* net TSS, *(g)* rate support grant and *(h)* population of England.

Mr. David Hunt: The figure for the standard spending assessment for the area of Tonbridge and Malling is £57·443 million, the distributable amount (DA) per adult is £292·51, the community charge for standard spending (CCSS) is £277·94, the relevant population of Tonbridge and Malling is 76,916, the distributable amount for 1990-91 is £10,428·5 million, net total standard spending (TSS) is £29,805·3 million, revenue support grant to be paid to receiving authorities is £9,467·6 million and the sum of the relevant populations of all charging authorities in England is 35,652,150.

Water Privatisation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applicants for water shares had their cheques cashed and have not received their shares.

Mr. Trippier: As at Friday 23 February, the receiving banks for the water share offers were dealing with about 750 requests for replacement interim share certificates.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis on which applications for water shares by small investors were scaled down.

Mr. Trippier: Full details of the scaling down of applications by customers receiving preference, and by others, were published in the national press on 12 December. Each of the 10 offers was substantially oversubscribed, and this necessitated scaling down of most applications. Allocations favoured applicants for the lowest denominations and, among those applicants, preference was given to qualified customers.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish a list of the major shareholders in the water industry.

Mr. Trippier: The registers of holders of interim rights in the water plcs are open to inspection. In addition, it is a requirement of the Companies Act that persons having an interest in 5 per cent. or more shares in any plc must give details of their interest to the company, and this information is open to public inspection.

Councillors (Employment)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if people who will be employed by any new arm's length company formed with the new legislation directed at local government and are members of local authorities will be able to continue service as a councillor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: After paragraph 21 of schedule 11 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 comes into force, a person employed by a company which is (in accordance with part V of that Act) under the control of a single local authority will be disqualified from membership of that authority. This will apply whether or not the company is an arm's length company.

Councillors (Payments)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made with local authority associations on the question of the new formula for payment for attending council meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities has received a letter from the chairmen of the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, setting out certain points agreed by these associations. He has made it clear that the introduction of the new scheme of remuneration for councillors will be deferred until 1 July 1990 while these points are considered.

Water Charges

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage increase in charge for each of the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 was proposed to him by the West Kent Water Company before he announced his proposals for limiting increases in the charges of the statutory water companies in the reply to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *640*.

Mr. Trippier: We took account of all representations made by West Kent Water Company before announcing our proposals for K on 7 February. It would not be appropriate for me to disclose the details of the company's representations as they were made on a commercial in confidence basis.

Meriden Gap

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing special measures to reduce the pressure for development in the Meriden gap between Birmingham and Coventry.

Mr. Moynihan: The area in question is in the green belt and is, therefore, subject to the strictest planning control; the Government will continue to attach great importance to maintaining effective green belt policies in areas like the Meriden gap.

Housing, Solihull

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to reduce the number of houses requiring land provision by Solihull council, contained in his strategic guidance for the west midlands published in February 1988 from 7,500 to 7,000.

Mr. Moynihan: The housing figures in the strategic guidance for the west midlands (now incorporated in

planning policy guidance note 10) were confirmed after extensive discussions with the relevant local authority in 1988. They are now being used in structure and unitary plan preparation. Any change in one component would have repercussions elsewhere and I cannot agree to make this proposed reduction.

Housing Management Grants

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received to the consultation paper on the new section 16 grant regime of the Housing and Planning Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The proposals outlined in the consultation paper were generally welcomed by respondents although some views were expressed about the expected local authority contribution and the level of support for ongoing training. I have carefully considered the representations made. I can see no reason to depart from the recommendations of the review committee.

Bids for promotion grant are now being invited from secondary agencies, and tenant groups wishing to apply for grant to develop a particular management option can now do so.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each month since January 1989 how many calls were made by the police to *(a)* Isis house and *(b)* ISIU Harmondsworth (i) where an immigration officer attended, (ii) which were cleared by telephone and (iii) where there was no immigration officer able to attend; and how many suspects were involved in each of the above three categories.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Isis House

	Instances of IO attending police stations	*Offenders interviewed at police stations*	*Calls cleared by telephone*	*Number IO available*
1989				
January	156	196	118	4
February	164	240	147	11
March	169	226	131	14
April	183	256	117	18
May	119	181	126	4
June	127	190	90	1
July	164	265	141	17
August	138	190	126	11
September	104	164	137	18
October	165	218	130	7
November	145	215	116	7
December	119	164	120	5
1990				
January	133	177	146	2

(b) *ISIU, Harmondsworth*

	Calls from the police[1]	*Number of immigration officers available*
1989		
January	174	0
February	202	0
March	188	0
April	185	0
May	175	0
June	182	5
July	193	7
August	212	4
September	180	1
October	185	3
November	220	1
December	187	2
1990		
January	272	2

[1]Enquiries cleared by telephone are not recorded separately and before November 1989 only the number of calls received was recorded —not the number of offenders; thereafter 1 call logged = 1 potential offender.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each month since January 1989 how many immigration offenders were identified as a result of police call-outs at *(a)* Isis house and *(b)* ISIU Harmondsworth.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Immigration offenders identified as a result of police call-outs

	(a) Isis House	*(b) ISIU Harmondsworth*
1989		
January	111	95
February	156	134
March	118	94
April	137	117
May	105	83
June	108	97
July	132	91
August	120	95
September	103	100
October	126	109
November	107	133
December	79	82
1990		
January	78	106

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suspected immigration offenders against whom action was taken by officers in each month since July 1989 at *(a)* Isis house and *(b)* ISIU Harmondsworth were (i) alleged illegal entrants, (ii) the

subjects of deportation orders, (iii) seaman deserters, (iv) overstayers, (v) people working in breach of conditions and (vi) people claiming British nationality; and how many in each category were (1) served with notices of intention to deport and (2) prosecuted in the courts in relation to the immigration offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Isis house—Offenders dealt with by category

	Illegal entrants	*Subjects of deportation orders*	*Seaman deserters*	*Overstayers*[1]	*Working in breach*[1]	*Claimed British nationality* *Total*	*Illegal entrants*	*Overstayers*	*Working in breach*
1989									
July	101	14	3	53	20	9	8	1	0
August	83	18	2	75	34	9	7	2	0
September	65	7	0	48	21	2	2	0	0
October	80	21	0	65	24	5	4	0	1
November	80	21	1	72	32	9	7	2	0
December	85	9	1	52	33	5	5	0	0
1990									
January	95	12	0	61	29	10	9	1	0

[1] Includes cases in which no further action was taken, a police caution was issued or a report was submitted to headquarters.

Available information about those served with notices of intention to deport or prosecuted for immigration offences relates to overstayers and those found working in breach of their conditions. This is set out below.

	Overstayers *Notice of intention to deport*	*Police prosecutions*	*Working in breach* *Notice of intention to deport*	*Police prosecutions*
1989				
July	45	0	14	2
August	71	1	28	3
September	44	3	19	1
October	58	1	17	2
November	68	1	25	2
December	45	1	28	1
1990				
January	57	0	16	4

(b) ISIU Harmondsworth—Offenders dealt with by category:

	Illegal Entrants	*Subjects of Deportation Orders*	*Seaman Deserters*	*Overstayers*	*Working in Breach*
1989					
July	75	3	0	31	29
August	66	4	1	37	33
September	86	6	0	40	28
October	90	6	0	34	30
November	119	10	0	34	32
December	82	15	1	28	27
1990					
January	93	10	1	52	47

Note: Those claiming British nationality are not recorded separately.

	Overstayers *Notice of Intention to Deport*	*Police Prosecutions*	*Working Breach* *Notice of Intention to Deport*	*Police Prosecutions*
1989				
July	31	0	27	2
August	37	0	21	2
September	40	0	25	3
October	31	3	27	3
November	34	0	30	2
December	24	4	27	0
1990				
January	46	6	45	2

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times in each month since July 1989 immigration officers at *(a)* Isis house and *(b)* ISIU Harmondsworth took action as a result of (i) police call-outs, (ii) denunciations, (iii) Home Office file inquiries, (iv) information provided by other Government agencies, (v) information arising from a major or middle-tier operation and (vi) information arising as a consequence of another inquiry.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Isis House

	Police call out	Denunciations	Action taken following Home Office file inquiries	Other Government agencies	Middle/major tier operations	Others
1989						
July	132	16	17	0	0	12
August	120	17	29	0	25	11
September	103	8	11	0	3	10
October	126	10	22	0	0	18
November	107	28	35	0	3	22
December	79	7	12	1	54	14
1990						
January	98	23	16	7	15	21

(b) ISIU, Harmondsworth

	Police call out	Denunciations	Action taken following Home Office file inquiries	Middle/major tier operations	Others[1]
1989					
July	91	17	14	7	6
August	95	12	8	6	5
September	100	15	13	25	6
October	109	22	9	3	11
November	133	20	18	18	5
December	82	23	22	16	5
1990					
January	106	15	18	24	20

[1] Includes information provided by other Government agencies.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make available to the House the report produced by the immigration service as a result of Operation Goldring.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The report concerns inquiries into applications for settlement on the basis of marriage and includes information about named individuals and agencies. It would not be appropriate to make this information available while the Department is considering the case for further action.

Alcohol (Animal Tests)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* dogs and *(b)* baboons have been used in licensed alcohol research during each calendar year since 1985;

(2) how many animals have been used in licensed experiments in the United Kingdom in connection with research into the link between alcohol and violent behaviour during each calendar year since 1980;

(3) what information he has about the number of animals which have become physically addicted to alcohol as a result of licensed alcohol research in the United Kingdom since 1980.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on scientific procedures relating to alcohol research has been collected separately only since 1987, and has been published in table 3 of "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1987" (Cm. 515) and 1988 (Cm. 743), copies of which are in the Library. These statistics disclose that there were eight procedures involving dogs in alcohol research in 1988, none involving dogs in 1987, and none involving non-human primates in either year. The information recorded centrally does not reveal the further details about alcohol research for which the hon. Member has asked.

Residence Directive

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the residence directive which has been agreed in principle by the Home Affairs Council makes provision for the residence in the United Kingdom of dependants of European Economic Community nationals who are citizens of nations other than members of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes. I explained to the House the provisions relating to family members during my speech on the proposed directives on 8 February at columns 1100-24.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the purpose of the minute of the recent meeting of the Council of Home Office Ministers which dealt with the possible extension of the definition of dependants for the purposes of the residence directive;

whether the Commission will be presenting proposals to deal with the issues raised in the minute; and if the issues covered by the minute will be dealt with by majority vote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 21 February at columns *810-11*. If the proposed right of residence directives are adopted on the revised legal bases favoured by the United Kingdom and a number of other member states, any future amendment to them would require unanimity.

Television Licences

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, South of 7 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 461, if he will now make a statement on the issue of concessionary television licences at Willey Flatts, in Yarm, about which he has also received correspondence from the hon. Member for Stockton, South.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we cannot identify the Willey Flatts scheme, nor trace any correspondence from my hon. Friend about it. If he will provide the full address, including the postcode, I shall be happy to investigate further.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Irish Foreign Minister; and what discussions took place concerning the possible release of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on 25 January 1990 at column 1044.

Firearms

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made by the Council of Home Office Ministers on the proposed mutual recognition of firearms licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the European Commission's proposals for a Council directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons. The Commission has now put forward a revised draft of the directive but no discussions have yet taken place within the Council on the revised draft. We are however currently considering the amended proposals very carefully. The indications are however that, as drafted, the revised directive is unlikely to be acceptable to us as it fails to provide those safeguards necessary to preserve security and maintain law and order.

Police (Corruption Inquiry)

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to public funds of the inquiry by West Yorkshire police into alleged police corruption involving certain Merseyside officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the charges which have been agreed by the West Yorkshire police for the investigation have totalled £43,600.

Demonstrations

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the cost of policing the students' march in London on 15 February; which roads were closed and between what hours; how many arrests were made; and whether he will consider issuing instructions to the Commissioner banning large marches on public roads during weekdays.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that on 15 February, between 12.45 pm and 2.40 pm, approximately 18,000 students marched from Battersea park to Hyde park. Some roads along the route were closed for a period as the march progressed, but information about the length of time particular roads were closed is not available. There were nine arrests during the march.

Section 12 of the Public Order Act 1986 enables the police to impose conditions on persons organising or taking part in a public procession if they reasonably believe it may result in serious public disorder, serious damage to property, serious disruption to the life of the community, or if its purpose is to coerce. In London any decision to impose conditions under the section is an operational matter for the Commissioner alone to decide.

I will write to my hon. Friend when information on the additional cost of policing the march is available.

Fire Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what computer codes have been or will be used to assist in the assessment of fire risk as part of his Department's consideration of public fire safety; and if such codes are open to public scientific scrutiny.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office statistical Department uses codes to computerise information recorded on the fire report forms received from United Kingdom fire brigades in respect of all major fires. The Home Office codebook is a complex document designed for use by trained coding staff. Work is currently under way in the Home Office to revise both the fire report form and associated coding. Interested parties are being consulted, and the final version will be distributed to all United Kingdom fire brigades.

Northamptonshire Constabulary

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish *(a)* the authorised establishment and *(b)* the actual strength of the Northamptonshire constabulary in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Northamptonshire Police

31 December	*Authorised establishment*	*Actual strength*
1979	978	926
1980	978	971
1981	1,066	1,003
1982	1,066	1,000
1983	1,018	1,001
1984	1,025	1,010
1985	1,031	1,017

31 December	Authorised establishment	Actual strength
1986	1,054	1,041
1987	1,074	1,075
1988	1,106	1,090
1989	1,121	1,119

From 1 April 1990, the authorised establishment of the force will be increased by 20 posts.

ID Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce national identity cards; what contingency plans he has for the introduction of identity cards should the need arise; whether he plans to study the advantages of introducing a national identity card in future; whether he has any plans to explore the technological specification for a national identity card; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The advantages and disadvantages of a compulsory system of identity cards were examined last year, when it was concluded that the former were outweighed by the latter. My right hon. and learned Friend accordingly has no plans to introduce such a system now, nor in any contingency which is at present foreseeable, and there would be no purpose in exploring the technological aspects of a compulsory card.

Gun Clubs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, column *592*, regarding gun clubs, if he will specify what he means by a reasonable time which will be allowed to them in which to comply with the revised criteria; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Home Office officials will shortly be writing to each approved club explaining the new criteria and indicating the date by which it should comply. Clubs will be given about three months from the date of issue of the letter in which to adapt to the new controls.

CPS (North Wales)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any complaints from the Chief Constable of North Wales about the conduct by the Crown prosecution service of north Wales of criminal proceedings against persons accused of assaults against police officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations from the chief constable of north Wales about the relationship between the police and the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Within the forum provided by the Director of Public Prosecution's senior liaison committee, on which the Home Office is also represented, the chief constable of north Wales, in his capacity as chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' crime committee, has raised matters of mutual interest to the police and the Crown prosecution service and has drawn attention to the effect of certain Crown prosecution service requirements on the police service.

Rates Arrears

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many repossession orders for non-payment of rates have been issued in each year since 1976 within each *(a)* district, *(b)* borough and *(c)* city council area; and how many individuals have been imprisoned due to rates arrears in the same period.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 15 February 1990]*: I am assuming that the information requested relates only to Wales. Information on repossession orders for non-payment of rates is not collected centrally. According to records held centrally, which are approximate, two people were known to have been committed to custody by courts in Wales for non-payment of rates in 1976. The corresponding figures for 1982 and 1988 were seven and four respectively. Statistics for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for England and Wales is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 6.3 of the latest volume, for 1988, Cm. 825) copies of which are in the Library.

Community Service

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the criminals failing to complete their community service orders are returned to court for re-sentencing.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: The available information is published in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1988" (table 7.28), a copy of which can be found in the Library. The information relates to the proportion of offenders sentenced to community service orders who breached that order. "Breach" means either the failure to comply with the requirements of the order, or the commission of a further offence. The court may either allow the order to remain in force, or revoke the order and resentence for the original offence.

Alcohol (Sale to Children)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were carried out in the past two years in West Yorkshire of people guilty of selling alcohol to children; if he will give the details year by year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 16 February 1990]*: Information for 1987 and 1988 is given in the table. Data for 1989 will not be available until autumn 1990.

Persons proceeded against for the illegal sale of alcohol to children
West Yorkshire

	1987	1988
Prosecutions	15	13
Convictions	11	12

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what compensation terms he is offering to companies who had invested in designing the technology necessary to introduce a football identity card.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The question of compensation does not arise. The companies responded in competition to the invitation to tender for the national membership scheme issued by consultants on behalf of the football authorities. The companies were fully aware that in considering whether to implement the scheme the Government would take account of Lord Justice Taylor's final report on the Hillsborough stadium disaster and that the Football Membership Authority would not be appointed until a statutory instrument had been made subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the extent of preventable loss arising from theft or misappropriation in his Department.

Mr. Cope: Each Department of the Northern Ireland Civil Service reports losses borne on its voted moneys in a losses statement appended to the end of the relevant appropriation account. These accounts are certified and reported to Parliament by the Comptroller and Auditor-General (Northern Ireland). The 1988-89 volume of the Northern Ireland Appropriation Accounts (HC2) was printed on 4 December 1989. Departments are obliged to report all losses above a prescribed threshold to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

In addition, Northern Ireland Departments are required to notify the Treasury Officer of Accounts of the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Comptroller and Auditor General (Northern Ireland) of all discovered fraud (including computer frauds) proven or suspected within a Department or non-departmental public body which are perpetrated by members of its own staff, or members of the public or by contractors.

For the year 1988-89 the following were reported:

	Number of cases	*Loss* £	*Recovered* £
Internal fraud (by staff)	12	30,638	1,380
External fraud (non-staff)	21	78,676	9,542

Also, for the year ending 31 December 1988 the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) reported 3,757 cases of fraudulent claims for various benefits which resulted in a total payment of £621,109.

The Northern Ireland Office does not prepare assessments on the extent of preventable loss arising from theft or misappropriation. Financial controls operate throughout the Department to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that loss arising from theft or misappropriation is prevented. In addition the Department's internal audit unit provides an assurance as to the adequacy, effectiveness and application of existing financial controls. There were no cases of fraud reported during the 1988-89 financial year. Financial controls would be reassessed in the light of evidence of losses from theft or misappropriation.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the methodology used in arriving at the regional rate.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the explanation of the regional rate methodology given in the information note "Northern Ireland Regional Rate" placed annually in the House of Commons Library in support of the statutory rule which gives effect to the regional rate. The Rates (Regional Rate) Order (Northern Ireland) for the current year was laid before Parliament on 7 March 1989. Similar arrangements will be made for 1990-91.

Fair Employment Commission

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many businesses in Northern Ireland have now registered with the Fair Employment Commission as directed under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989; and what is the estimate of the number of businesses which have failed to register, but are required to do so.

Mr. Needham: As at 16 February 1990, a total of 1,662 concerns had registered with the Fair Employment Commission. The commission is currently not in a position to state how many concerns have failed to register. The commission's legal department is taking action to obtain information from approximately 80 concerns in order to establish whether they should have registered.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to introduce regulations that allow voters to opt out or opt in to the sale of their name and address from electoral registers; whether he has discussions with the Data Protection Registrar concerning the sale of the names and addresses from the electoral register; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: No. The operation of the electoral registration system requires that the information in the register should be freely available. The provisions of the Representation of the People (NI) Regulations 1986 governing the publication and supply of the register reflect this fact and the conclusion that its use for other purposes could not effectively be prevented. The Data Protection Registrar was consulted before the provisions governing the sale of the electoral register in data form were introduced.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to introduce regulations to alert voters to the fact that their name and address are routinely disclosed from the electoral register for other purposes; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We have no such plans. The electoral register is a public document.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to introduce regulations to protect voters who may be vulnerable to attack if their name and address appeared on an electoral register that is available for sale or inspection by the public; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We have no plans to do so at present, but we shall continue to keep the matter under careful review.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Marchioness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions expects to complete his consideration of whether to bring criminal proceedings in connection with the sinking of the Marchioness.

The Attorney-General: The police investigation into the sinking of the Marchioness commenced immediately after the incident and is continuing. A number of reports have been submitted to the director (the most recent on 20 February 1990) which he is now considering with the benefit of advice from Treasury counsel.

The director recognises the degree of public interest which attaches to the case and will ensure that it is dealt with as expeditiously as is consistent with thorough investigation and proper consideration of the evidence.

HEALTH

Doncaster Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he proposes to take in response to the decision taken by the Doncaster health authority regarding the expression of interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. The decision on whether to submit a formal application for NHS trust status, when Parliament has approved the necessary legislation, is a matter for the sponsors of the expression of interest in the unit concerned. When formal applications are prepared, RHAs will ensure that they are given local publicity and will seek the views of those with an interest including the health authorities concerned. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider these views alongside the application, before deciding whether to approve it.

British Medical Association

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to carry through assurances covered in his letter to the British Medical Association on 10 October 1989 into legislative proposals to Parliament.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My letter of 10 October 1989 to the British Medical Association reiterated assurances that firm budgets for drugs will not operate as cash limits and that the management arrangements proposed for operating the indicative prescribing budget scheme will not infringe in any way the right of a general practitioner to prescribe all those medicines which individual patients might need. This has always been Government policy and the proposals in the NHS and Community Care Bill are consistent with these assurances.

General Practitioners

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of patients on general practitioner lists for England and Wales and the Rochdale health authority area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The figures requested for England and Wales and the Rochdale health authority area are 1,990 and 2,124 respectively, in 1988. In 1979 the average number of patients on general practitioner lists for England and Wales was 2,277, in the Rochdale health authority area the figure was 2,664.

Charter for Children

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the charter for children, and the recommendations of the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For many years the Department has provided grant aid to the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital. We welcomed production of the charter. Recently we have received representations suggesting that district health authorities should refer to the charter in framing contracts for the provision of children's health services following implementation of the National Health Service review. We will commend this suggestion to health authorities.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will supply information on the achievement of the resource allocation working party target, for each year since its inception, in relation to all districts in the Mersey region.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally.

Disabled People (Services)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of the evidence in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" that there is widespread failure by local authorities to fulfil their duties under section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 and section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, he will use his powers under section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948 to take urgent action in all individual cases brought to his attention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: While the report revealed differences in the extent to which social services departments have agreed new policies and introduced new operational plans in the light of section 4 of the Act, it did not reveal evidence of widespread failure to comply with that section. Requests to invoke section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948 are considered on their merits. The Department takes up serious cases directly with the authority concerned.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of the evidence in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" that money allocated through rate support grant for the implementation of sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 gets lost elsewhere, he will reconsider his decision not to ring-fence funds transferred from the social security budget for community care in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. We believe that Government support for community care expenditure, as with other important local authority functions, is best provided through the revenue support grant. This will ensure maximum local accountability and encourage value for money by enabling local authorities to make decisions about community care based on local factors. A large specific grant under direct control of central Government would weaken the improved accountability of local authorities to those who will be providing funds through the community charge scheme.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in view of the evidence in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" that his Department's circulars on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 have been widely ignored or misunderstood, what action he will take to ensure that there is greater compliance with the guidance he will issue on the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: While the report indicated that with some sections of the Act, some authorities had still to translate intention into action, and some were confused about how section 10 of the Act should be interpreted, it did not produce evidence that departmental guidance on the Act had been widely ignored or misunderstood. The guidance we intend to issue to help local authorities implement our proposals for community care will be drawn up in close consultation with them and will be linked to the statutory requirements outlined in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. The social services inspectorate will closely monitor compliance with the guidance.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in view of the evidence in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" concerning the implementation of section 8 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, what action he intends to take to ensure that his policies in the White Paper "Caring for People" in relation to support for informal carers are put into practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We will be requiring local authorities to publish community care plans, setting out information to be provided to service users and their carers about the social care services available to them. We intend local authorities to involve other interested agencies including carers in drawing up their plans. The social services inspectorate will play an active part in inspecting these plans, monitoring performance and offering advice and guidance to authorities and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Where necessary we will not hesitate to intervene in order to stimulate improvements.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of the evidence in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" concerning the implementations of section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 he will now produce, in conjunction with the local authority associations and voluntary organisations, model guidelines on the provision of information to people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The report showed that local authorities are aware of the need to improve their information services and many are planning to produce booklets and leaflets. We will be monitoring further progress in this area. In view of the differences in local circumstances, we do not think model guidelines would be helpful.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of the evidence in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" concerning the implementations of section 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 he will now seek information from local authorities in England about persons co-opted on to social services committees under that section and the procedures for selecting them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to extend detailed inquiries about the operation of section 10 to all local authorities. A copy of the report has been sent to all directors of social services. The implications of the findings in respect of this and other sections will be discussed at a seminar on 6 March arranged by the social services inspectorate to explore ways of developing services to disabled people in the light of the report. The seminar will be attended by managers of social services departments, representatives from voluntary organisations concerned with disability, and disabled people and their carers.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take on the recommendation in the social services inspectorate report "Developing Services for Disabled People" that the problems with London in respect of implementing the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 warrant further investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The seminar to which I referred in my replies to the right hon. Member today is expected to take particular note of the problems highlighted by the report concerning implementation of the Act in London, and to consider the steps which might be taken to tackle them.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he will take in relation to local authorities which fail to fulfil their duties under sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 in respect of disabled young people leaving full-time education at the end of next summer term; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: While the report highlighted the difficulties some authorities may face in setting up arrangements for disabled school leavers next summer it would not be right to assume from this that there will be failure to comply with these sections. A follow-up report on the operation of these sections last summer is in preparation and will be published shortly. There will be further discussions of these issues at the seminar on 6 March which can be expected to give a clearer indication of the position across a wide range of local authorities.

Health Authorities (Computer Processing)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which regional health authorities have transferred their computer processing to which commercial organisations; and in each case what has happened to those who were employed by the authorities in work related to computer processing.

Mr. Freeman: Details of those regional health authorities that have transferred their computer processing to commercial organisations are as follows:

WESSEX—Have transferred all computer processing to the private sector. Two centres exist containing former RHA computer staff covering both IBM and ICL installations. One is run by ISTEL and the other by Wessex Integrated Systems, a subsidiary of CIPFA Facilities Management Ltd. The staff are all working in the private sector except for a small core organisation responsible for strategic advice, overall monitoring and contract compliance.

TRENT—Have transferred their RHA computer centre to ISTEL. The computer centre employed 88 staff and 83 of these have transferred to ISTEL's payroll; the remaining five will remain on the RHA payroll but are contracted to work for the new organisation.

WEST MIDLANDS—A management buyout of the RHA's Management Service Division was concluded on 20 December. The new company is called QA Business Services and all staff have transferred to it.

Four other Regions—Yorkshire, Mersey, Northern and East Anglian are at varying stages of negotiation with commercial organisations.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the procedures for abortion included within the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys statistics under the terms *(a)* other surgical, *(b)* other medical and *(c)* other and combined methods.

Mr. Freeman: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has taken to ensure that all selective reductions of pregnancy are being registered under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised that doctors should perform selective reduction of pregnancy only if the requirements of the Abortion Act 1967 are fulfilled. All operating practitioners are required to notify the Chief Medical Officer, within seven days, of each abortion they perform.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, on 20 February, if his Department has sought or received information from the Humana hospital regarding the selective reductions of pregnancy carried out there.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department does not release information of a confidential nature about treatment given to patients in hospitals or elsewhere.

Powered Wheelchairs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the reports on the powered wheelchair study being carried out by the Disablement Services Authority.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the Disablement Services Authority, which established the study and will, no doubt, act on its results.

Hospital Optometrists

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has issued any instructions altering the pay rates of hospital optometrists; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A new pay and grading structure for hospital optometrists had been agreed and the new pay rates were promulgated in "Advance Letter (OP) 1/90" issued on 19 January 1990, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The agreement gives an increase on all pay scales of 6·5 per cent. from 1 April 1989, assimilation to a new pay spine from 1 December 1989 and regrading under the new structures to be completed by 1 July 1990. The new spine gives salaries in the following ranges:

Grade A — £9,239 to £12,158
Grade B —£12,644 to £23,682
Grade C —£22,771 to £31,164 (or £37,915 with full use of five discretionary points available to employing authorities under the agreement).

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total paid, or liabilities entered into, by the West Midlands ambulance service in respect of support and services supplied by the police, the Army and other organisations from the start of the ambulance dispute to the latest available date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cost of military assistance to individual health authorities has not yet been assessed. The costs of assistance by police and other organisations are met directly by the health authorities concerned and information is not available centrally.

Organ Donations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to instruct area health authorities to include questions regarding donation of organs on hospital admissions forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to issue such instructions.

Milk Tokens

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what publicity he intends to give to the possibility of exchanging the devalued milk token for a giro for the full cost of a pint of milk at local Department of Social Security offices.

Mr. Freeman: There does not appear to be any need for publicity on this particular aspect of the milk token scheme. Local social security offices will continue, as before, to exchange a milk token for a giro where, exceptionally, a beneficiary has been unable to obtain milk. Local offices will continue to offer advice on all benefits when needed.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what safeguards he has included to ensure that the value of the token can be spent only on milk when a milk token is exchanged for a giro;

(2) whether recipients of milk tokens are able to claim their statutory right to a free pint of milk a day by exchanging their tokens for a giro for the actual cost of a pint of milk at their Department of Social Security offices.

Mr. Freeman: Cash is given in lieu of milk tokens when beneficiaries, exceptionally, cannot obtain milk with the token. This is done only when local social security offices are satisfied that the token cannot be used to obtain milk and beneficiaries are advised that the cash is intended for milk.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what staffing provisions he has made within the Department of Social Security to cope with the expected number of potential claimants who will wish to exchange their milk tokens for giro.

Mr. Freeman: Staffing provisions already take account of this practice which has been carried out by social security local offices for a number of years.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will restore the value of the milk token to a level sufficient to cover the cost of a pint of milk delivered to the doorstep or purchased in a neighbourhood shop.

Mr. Freeman: The reimbursement price system brought into effect on 28 January 1990 reflects the size and value to the dairy industry of the welfare milk scheme, which enables liquid milk to be obtained on the doorstep or from any shop.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis people were invited to attend the meetings on National Health Service trusts held on 23 and 24 October 1989, 14 and 15 December 1989, and 22 and 23 January.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: People were invited to these meetings on the basis that they represented units which have indicated that they were considering preparing applications to become NHS trusts in April 1991, if Parliament approves the necessary legislation. A representative from each regional health authority was also invited.

North Western RHA

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* inpatients, *(b)* outpatients and *(c)* day patients were treated by the North Western regional health authority and South Manchester health authority in 1988 and 1989; and how many were treated in 1978 and 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Patients treated in NHS hospitals, North Western and South Manchester health authorities, 1978, 1979 and 1988-89

	1978	*1979*	*1988-89*	*Per cent. increase 1978 — 1988-89*
North Western Regional Health Authority				
In-patient cases treated	511,674	509,049	640,548	25·2
Day case admissions	68,080	70,608	126,486	85·8
New out-patients	707,676	699,717	779,346	10·1
Total out patient attendances	3,149,423	3,156,219	3,512,983	11·5
South Manchester District Health Authority				
In-patient cases treated	57,545	57,110	72,389	25·8
Day case admissions	5,502	6,975	18,940	244·2
New out-patients	68,354	69,137	75,183	10·0
Total out patient attendances	354,740	361,288	379,472	7·0

Source: 1978, 1979; SH3 return. 1988-89; SH3a, KH09, KH18 and KP70 returns.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the amount of funding other than Government funding for each training and enterprise council.

Mr. Eggar: It will be for each training and enterprise council to decide how it will generate income from sources other than Government funding.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, in respect of each training and enterprise council appointed, the number of competitive bidders there were.

Mr. Eggar: I have not received any competing bids to set up a training and enterprise council (TEC) from different groups covering the same area.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all the training and enterprise councils together with their likely operational date.

Mr. Eggar: Fifty-five employer-led groups have been given development funding to establish training and enterprise councils (TECs). The areas involved are listed in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) *Official Report*, 13 February 1990, columns *207-08*. These groups are now preparing their proposed corporate and business plans for consideration by the national training task force.

We expect the first TECs to become operational in spring 1990 and others will follow.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the board members of each training and enterprise council together with their occupation.

Mr. Eggar: Employer-led groups are currently drawing up corporate and business plans for training and enterprise councils (TECs). These plans will include the proposed board of directors of each TEC. A full list of board members is not therefore currently available.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations have been made to him by training and enterprise councils about funding.

Mr. Eggar: I have received a number of representations on funding from training and enterprise councils as they prepare their corporate and business plans.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether training and enterprise councils will be required to publish an annual analysis of their activities or other means of public information.

Mr. Eggar: Each training and enterprise council (TEC) will be required to publish a summary of its corporate and business plan. In addition each TEC will be required to publish an annual report and a statement of audited accounts.

Visually Handicapped People

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what assessment he has made of the training needs of workers with visually handicapped people;

(2) what discussions have been held with the Association of Directors of Social Services on the resourcing of training of specialist workers with visually handicapped people;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that there are adequate numbers of specialist workers with visually handicapped people; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The number of specialists employed by local authority social service departments to work with visually handicapped people is a matter for individual authorities to decide in the light of their assessment of local need. In 1985, the Department commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to carry out a comprehensive review of the training and work of specialist workers with visually handicapped people. This was followed, in 1988, by an external management and financial review of the three specialist training bodies concerned. Officials have held discussions based on the recommendations in the reports of these reviews with a variety of interests, including representatives of local authorities, voluntary organisations and the relevant specialist training bodies. The recommendations in the reports have also been drawn to the attention of the Association of Directors of Social Services.

Action Credit

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether it is the policy of his Department to treat action credit participants as employees in the same way as employment training and YTS participants for the purposes of *(a)* the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, *(b)* the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 and *(c)* the Race Relations Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Participants in the action credit pilot scheme have the same rights under *(a)* the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, *(b)* the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 and *(c)* the Race Relations Act 1976, as other employees.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment both in actual numbers and expressed as a percentage, according to the latest figures and in 1979 for *(a)* Birkenhead travel-to-work area, *(b)* Merseyside, *(c)* England and *(d)* Great Britain; and if he will express the change in the number unemployed in each of the four categories in percentage terms.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is contained in the following tables.

Where available, unemployment data are normally given on a seasonally adjusted, consistent basis, with unemployment rates expressed as a percentage of the work force, as given in table 2. The unadjusted data given for England and Great Britain in table 1 can be used to make comparisons with the smaller area figures, for which seasonally adjusted data are not available. However, comparisons over time shown in table 1 are affected by changes to the count as well as seasonal influences, in particular the change from the registrant to the claimant count in 1982.

Table 1: Unemployment, not seasonally adjusted

	Birkenhead TTWA[1]		*Wirral and Chester TTWA*[1]		*Merseyside*		*England*		*Great Britain*	
	Number	*Percentage rate*[2]	*Number*	*Percentage rate*[2]	*Number*	*Percentage rate*[2]	*Number*	*Percentage rate*[2]	*Number*	*Percentage rate*[2]
January 1979 (Registrants)	17,003	10·6	—	—	83,666	12·0	1,108,433	5·4	1,391,220	5·9
June 1983 (Claimants)	29,632	18·5	35,359	17·2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage change	74·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
January 1990 (Claimants)	—	—	21,761	10·5	84,423	14·1	1,277,107	6·2	1,586,632	6·6
Percentage change	—	—	−38·5	—	0·9	—	15·2	—	14·0	—

[1] The definition of travel-to-work areas changed in 1984. The current travel-to-work area within which Birkenhead falls is Wirral and Chester. Data is for the current area back to the earliest available date (June 1983). Earlier data is given for the old travel-to-work area of Birkenhead.
[2] Narrow based rate.

Table 2: Unemployment, seasonally adjusted

	England		Great Britain	
	Number	*Percentage rate*[1]	*Number*	*Percentage rate*[1]
January 1979	842,300	3·8	1,049,900	4·0
January 1990	1,221,000	5·1	1,512,200	5·5
Percentage change	45·0	—	44·0	—

[1] Workforce rates.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed claimants, based on the national monthly returns between 9 October 1989 and the period ending 24 December 1989 and for each region and for Great Britain as a whole *(a)* have been issued with warning letters for not actively seeking work, *(b)* had their claims referred to an adjudicating officer for not actively seeking work, *(c)* had their claims allowed or disallowed and *(d)* have been referred to an adjudicating officer for refusing suitable employment; and how many of those in *(d)* have had their benefits disqualified.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the statistical information for the period 9 October to 29 December 1989 on questions of actively seeking employment and refusal of employment.

National monthly return—actively seeking referrals and disallowances refusal of employment referrals and disqualifications
Period ending: 29 December 1989

Regions	*Actively seeking employment*			*Refusal of Employment*			
	Claimants issued warning letters	*Claims referred to adjudication officer*	*Allowed*	*Disallowed*	*Claims referred to adjudication officer*	*Not disqualified*	*Disqualified*
Northern	430	50	5	17	17	4	10
Yorkshire and Humberside	481	80	3	18	61	6	2
East Midlands and Eastern	515	68	33	11	89	21	20
London and South East	2,689	463	84	71	536	54	59
South West	474	107	16	28	45	6	4
Wales	548	99	16	16	53	6	11
West Midlands	585	79	20	13	86	17	7
North West	831	76	30	20	45	9	8
Scotland	917	96	20	19	42	13	2
National	7,470	1,118	227	213	974	136	123

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Interests

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has received any representations on the latest report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have received no formal representations.

School Visits

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received about the delay experienced by a party from Swindon comprehensive school, near Rotherham, on 20 February before it was possible to commence their visit to this place, and if he will urgently consider improvement of the arrangements concerning such visits.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: None. Proposals to duplicate the screening facilities in the Norman Porch in order to speed up access for visitors have already been agreed with the other place and English Heritage. It is hoped that these arrangements will be ready by late spring.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Order Paper

75. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the current estimated annual cost of producing the House's Order Paper.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The actual cost of producing the Order Paper in 1989 was £770,000.

Traffic Safety

77. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give fresh consideration to the need to make representations to Westminster city council for traffic measures to improve the safety of hon. Members whose offices are in Old Palace Yard and other locations which involve frequent road crossings.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that after further consideration of Westminster city council's proposals the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee accepts that the regulation of pedestrians in the vicinity of Parliament square is essential to the improved flow of traffic. They consider that a crossing from Old Palace Yard would seriously impede that objective. It is, however, hoped that more effective control of traffic and pedestrians at other points will achieve an overall improvement in the balance between pedestrian safety and traffic flow.

Chief Whips (Archives)

78. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make available accommodation for the archives of Government Chief Whips.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No.

Government Accountability

79. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any proposals to strengthen the powers of the House to hold the Government to account for their actions; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. Ministers are already fully accountable to Parliament.

Timetable Motions

80. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward an amendment to Standing Orders to provide that the Report stage and Third Reading of all Bills will be timetabled only if a minimum of two weekends has passed since Committee stage.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans to do so.

Offical Residence

81. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if there are any plans to designate an official residence for the Lord President of the Council.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There are no such plans.

House Stationery

82. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he intends to introduce recycled paper for all House stationery.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Services Committee has fully endorsed the principle of advancing the use of stationery made from recycled material by Members and Departments of the House. To this end the authorities of the House have been asked to liaise with HMSO to identify the extent to which it would be appropriate and practicable to use recycled paper for stationery and for parliamentary publications. Their report will be considered as soon as it is received.

Members' Interests

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he wll bring forward proposals to strengthen the Register of Members' Interests.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no proposals at present. The appropriate body to consider any changes in the first instance is the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

TRANSPORT

Travel Concessions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of providing free bus travel to pensioners and disabled persons in England and Wales for the year 1989-90.

Mr. Portillo: Total local authority expenditure on all travel concessions for pensioners, disabled persons and children in 1989-90 in England and Wales is estimated at £350 million. No information is available on how much of this expenditure is on free bus travel for pensioners and disabled persons.

Air Fares

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the normal business fares and cheapest fares available for flights between *(a)* London and *(b)* Manchester to (i) Stockholm and (ii) Moscow.

Mr. McLoughlin: The normal business fares are as follows:

	£
London-Stockholm	216
Manchester-Stockholm	275
London-Moscow	427
Manchester-Moscow	487

The cheapest fares are as follows:

	Return £
London-Stockholm	189
Manchester-Stockholm	235
London-Moscow	270
Manchester-Moscow	356

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to differences in the costs of air tickets from Manchester and London to European destinations of similar distance from the two cities; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Air fares from Manchester or from any other airport reflect the costs of providing the service concerned and the effects of the degree of competition on the route served. Fares from Manchester to European destinations tend to be higher than fares from London for a similar distance because of the lower level of demand which reduces operators' opportunities for achieving economies of scale.

The best way of reducing fares all round, including those from Manchester, is through increased competition. Government policy is to remove restrictions in aviation agreements between Governments so that airlines are free to compete on fares and other aspects of their services, subject only to proper safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour. We have had considerable success in liberalisation, both bilaterally and within the European Community.

Marchioness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is *(a)* the earliest and *(b)* the latest date by which he understands the marine accident investigation branch report into the sinking of the Marchioness will be *(a)* completed, *(b)* submitted to him and *(c)* published.

Mr. McLoughlin: The inspector who led the inquiry into the Marchioness accident has submitted his findings and recommendations to the chief inspector of marine

accidents who is now preparing his report for submission to the Secretary of State. The Accident Investigation Regulations provide for any whose reputations may be adversely affected to see the proposed text of the chief inspector's report so that if any relevant sections are not agreed an alternative can be published as an appendix to the report. This important procedure will take a minimum of two months. Publication is expected to follow as soon as is practicable thereafter.

East London River Crossing

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received on the east London river crossing; and what percentage of the total *(a)* support and *(b)* object to the proposals.

Mr. Atkins: The decision that the east London river crossing should be built was taken in July 1988 and orders under the Highways Act 1980 have been made, fixing the route of the new trunk road. Further draft orders were published in January 1990 proposing a new design for the bridge across the River Thames and changes to the junctions with the A13, Windsor terrace and the A2016. At the end of the objection period for these further draft orders on 22 February, over 6,200 representations had been received, many in a standard form as a result of campaigns by certain pressure groups. These are being analysed and a breakdown is not available at present.

British Rail

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest projected figures for investment in British Rail over *(a)* the period 1990-1993 and *(b)* the period 1990-2000.

Mr. Portillo: Chapter 7 of the Public Expenditure White Paper includes British Rail plans to invest £3·7 billion in the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93, a 75 per cent. real increase over the previous three years. British Rail has included a projection for 1993-94 in its corporate plan, but no projections have been made for subsequent years.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the total sums which his Department has *(a)* authorised for investment in the British Rail network and *(b)* paid to British Rail by way of public service obligation and any other Exchequer grants for the current British Rail financial year and for each of the two preceding years.

Mr. Portillo: All the information requested was published in chapter 7 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93" (Cm. 1007). British Rail's financial year, like the Government's, starts on 1 April.

Road Building

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest projected figures for investment in road building in the United Kingdom over *(a)* the period 1990-93 and *(b)* the period 1990-2000.

Mr. Atkins: Planned expenditure on trunk road building in England is as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	1,282
1991-92	1,322
1992-93	1,403
Total	4,007

Yearly expenditure plans are made only for the three-year PES period. Road expenditure in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a matter for the respective Secretaries of State. The figures do not include private finance.

Local road building projections are a matter for local highway authorities. Chapter 7 of Cm 1007 lists the information available to the Department about local roads schemes over £1 million in 1990-91 in England.

Public Transport

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest projected figure for investment in public transport over *(a)* the period 1990-1993 and *(b)* the period 1990-2000.

Mr. Portillo: Information about the investment plans of the nationalised transport industries is contained in the public expenditure White Paper. For those industries for which my Department is responsible, the figures are:

			£ million
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
British Rail	1,052	1,258	1,421
London Regional Transport	560	630	610
Civil Aviation Authority	90	85	106

The figures shown for LRT exclude investment in the Jubilee line extension for which provision is shown separately in the White Paper. Planned investment in this project during the plan period is as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	40
1991-92	190
1992-93	300

The proportion of total local authority resources allocated to public transport is a matter for local discretion. Information on the resources available for local authority capital programmes in 1990-91 is given in paragraphs 76-77 of the Department of Transport chapter of the White Paper (Cm. 1007). No data are available for future years.

The investment plans of private sector transport operators are a matter for them.

No information is available on public transport investment plans beyond 1993.

Merseytravel

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many delegations have written to him requesting a meeting to discuss Merseytravel's case for Government assistance; and how many he has met.

Mr. Atkins: I received three requests to meet delegations; hon. Members from Merseyside made their views known to me, both orally and in writing. I took these into account before making my decision, which was based primarily on the written submissions prepared by Merseytravel.

A61 (Environmental Damage)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish the report of a study carried out by his Department's research laboratory on the A61 in Outwood in the Normanton constituency, giving the findings of the effects on the environment that traffic using this road is having on the local community; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to have the report on the traffic nuisance study carried out in December 1989 on the A61 in Outwood, in the Normanton constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The survey of traffic nuisance on the A61 at Outwood is being carried out as part of a wider study by the transport and road research laboratory to develop methods of assessing the environmental effects of roads and traffic. This involves surveys at 10 sites round the country, selected to represent a range of traffic conditions. The work is not aimed at identifying or solving problems at specific sites, and it is not intended to publish the findings of the Outwood survey separately or otherwise than in the form of statistical summaries. The information gained should enable the Department to refine its procedures for the environmental appraisal of road schemes by giving a firmer indication of the extent to which a new road, bypass or road improvement will reduce the nuisance caused by traffic. The work so far has been of an explanatory nature only. The main part of the study is likely to be completed by late 1991 and published soon afterwards.

I regret that, because of an error in identifying the constituency in which this survey was to take place, the hon. Member was not informed in the usual way. An apology has been sent to the hon. Member by my Department.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what controls there are on the transportation of dangerous liquid on the public highway.

Mr. Atkins: The carriage of dangerous liquids by road is subject to the following regulations:

The Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981;

The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984, as amended;

The Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc.) Regulations 1986, as amended.

Public Utilities Streetworks Act

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the 73 recommendations mentioned in the report of Professor M. R. Horne on a review of the Public Utilities Streetworks Act 1950 have so far been implemented.

Mr. Atkins: Action has been put in hand or completed on all those recommendations in the Horne report which were accepted by the Government in their reponse published in July 1986. About two thirds of the report's recommendations require primary legislation and a consultation document was issued in May 1989 describing the proposed provisions to be included in a Bill which the Government intend to bring forward at a suitable opportunity.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to amend the Public Utility Streetworks Act 1950 to take account of the increased use of roads over the past five years and the traffic delays caused by excavations in road surfaces so as to accord with modern traffic flow requirements.

Mr. Atkins: Yes. Our proposals for legislation to reform the 1950 Act pay particular attention to the need to reduce the amount of traffic disruption caused by street works.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to increase the controls on contractors for failure to reinstate road surfaces under the Public Utilities Streetworks Act 1950.

Mr. Atkins: Our proposals for legislation to reform the 1950 Act include new requirements on undertakers of works to ensure that their reinstatements conform to prescribed standards for a fixed guarantee period.

Crash Barriers

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to install crash barriers along all Britain's motorways.

Mr. Atkins: Central reserve safety fencing is an integral feature of motorway design. It is installed on all motorways except where the carriageways are widely separated.

Transport Investment

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has undertaken of the relative costs and benefits of investment in *(a)* car transport and *(b)* cycle transport.

Mr. Atkins: None. Investment in private means of transport is a matter of personal choice.

Cyclists

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken by his Department concerning the effect of greater numbers of cyclists on decreasing vehicle pollution and global warming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We have not undertaken such a specific study, but preliminary results from our cycle routes programme of research suggests that where modal shift to cycling takes place, the transfer is marginal. The evidence suggests that it tends to be from public transport and walking as much as from cars.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the first train to go through the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter for Eurotunnel. Its projected completion of the tunnel system is 15 June 1993.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for income support have been made since April 1988 at the local offices of his Department in *(a)* west Leeds, *(b)* Leeds, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* England as a whole; and how many of these claims were accepted.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is in the table.

	(a) West Leeds	*(b) Leeds*	*(c) West Yorkshire*	*(d) England*
1988-89				
Claims received	8,669	53,949	158,155	3,040,010
Claims awarded	6,549	43,036	124,860	2,373,514
1989-90				
Claims received[1]	7,948	46,947	138,592	2,660,959
Claims awarded[1]	5,581	34,667	102,141	1,901,468

[1] Figures (which are provisional and subject to amendment) do not include claims received or determined after December 1989.

Benefits

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the latest figures of how many people are dependent on *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit, broken down into claimants, dependants and children and into England, Scotland and Wales.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is set out in the tables.

(a) Claimants, partners and dependants in receipt of income support for May 1988[1,2]

Thousands

	Claimants	*Partners*	*Dependants*	*Total*
England	3,594	696	1,830	6,121
Scotland	499	92	236	827
Wales	259	53	129	441
Great Britain	4,352	841	2,195	7,388

(b) Non-income support recipients of housing benefit May 1988[2,3,4,5]

Thousands

	Claimants	*Partners*	*Children*	*Total*
England	1,950	640	380	2,970
Scotland	310	100	80	480
Wales	110	40	30	180
Great Britain	2,370	780	430	3,630

Family credit recipients as at 30 September 1989[3]

Thousands

	Claimants	*Partners*	*Children*	*Total number dependant on family credit*[6]
England	257	160	545	962
Scotland	39	23	77	140
Wales	22	15	46	84
Great Britain	318	198	668	1,186

[1] *Source:* Annual statistical enquiry.
[2] *Source:* Housing Benefit Management Information System—May 1988.
[3] Figures rounded.
[4] Figures relate to non-Income Support recipients on Housing Benefit.
[5] It should be noted that some Family Credit recipients may also be in receipt of Housing Benefit.
[6] The totals are subject to rounding.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to publish comparative data on the United Kingdom benefits scheme and that available in other Community member countries.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since 1979 the Department has produced an annual publication entitled "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities". Copies of this publication are in the Library.

Social Fund

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the social security offices which received an extra allocation of money for the social fund.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

London North Region
Ealing
Euston
Highgate
Paddington
Poplar
Tottenham
Wood Green
Walthamstow

London South Region
Ashford
Brighton
Camberwell
Crawley
Croydon
Kennington Park
Oval
Peckham
Portsmouth, South
Southwark

Midlands Region
Birmingham, Northfield
Birmingham, Perry Barr
Birmingham, Washwood Heath
Chesterfield
Coventry, East
Leicester Lower Hill Street
Mansfield
Nottingham, Castle Gate
Nottingham, David Lane
Nottingham, Shakespeare Street
Nottingham, Station Street
Stoke, North
Stoke, South

North East Region
Bishop Auckland

Bradford, South
Dewsbury
Eston
Hartlepool
Hemsworth
Houghton le Spring
Huddersfield
Hull, East
Keighley
Leeds, North West
Middlesbrough
North Shields
Peterlee
Redcar
Sheffield, South East
South Shields
Stockton
Sunderland, South
Wakefield
Wath-on-Dearne
York

North West Region
Birkenhead, South
Blackburn
Buxton
Failsworth
Huyton
Liverpool, Belle Vale
Liverpool, Breckfield
Liverpool, City
Liverpool, Garston
Liverpool, Norris Gardens
Liverpool, West Derby
Manchester, Central
Manchester, Longsight
Manchester, Wythenshawe
Middleton
Salford, North
St. Helens

Scotland Region
Aberdeen, North
Arbroath
Bathgate
Campbletown
Clydebank
Dundee, West
Glasgow, Anniesland
Glasgow, Craigton
Glasgow, Laurieston
Glasgow, Provan
Glasgow, Springburn
Kilmarnock
Leven
Peterhead
Stornoway
Stranraer

Wales and South West Region
Aberdare
Anglesey
Bargoed
Barry
Bridgend
Bristol, South
Caerphilly
Carmarthen
Chippenham
Deeside
Haverfordwest
Merthyr Tydfil
Morriston
Newport (Gwent)
Port Talbot
Porth
Trowbridge
Truro
Weymouth
Wrexham (Group)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, following the High Court judgment on the handling of the social fund, he will now remove the budget limit on social fund payments and recompense retrospectively those claimants whom the High Court judgment has now indicated have been deprived of their rights in the past; and if he will now make a full statement on his response to the High Court decision.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: The High Court judgment concerned three applications for judicial review relating to different aspects of the social fund. Its essential points were:

The power to give directions for the control and management of the social fund was confirmed.

The directions on how social fund inspectors are to review decisions have been confirmed, but the guidance was found not to be consistent with the directions.

The guidance on how the budget is to be taken into account in making decisions was found to be too prescriptive, and therefore not valid as guidance.

We are consulting the social fund commissioner about the revision of guidance to social fund inspectors in the light of the second point of the judgment.

So far as the third point is concerned, a letter was sent to all Department of Social Security offices by electronic mail on the day of the judgment, advising social fund officers that the local office budget and the level of priority that might usually be met are factors to be taken into account in reaching a decision and that the state of the local office budget is not the overriding factor. We intend to issue revised guidance shortly, taking account of the court's decision. That revised guidance will also take into account the fact that the requirements of the Social Security Act itself explicitly provide that social fund officers must have regard to the budget, and that the court itself recognised the clear intention of Parliament that the scheme should be subject to strict monetary limits. The revised guidance will be placed in the Library.

We are considering whether further steps may be needed to ensure that the social fund is able to continue operating flexibly in accordance with the requirements of the primary legislation.

In the Government's view a firm budgetary framework is essential to the sensible operation of the fund and nothing in the judgment calls that into question.

One-parent Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of one-parent families living in the London borough of Lambeth claiming one-parent benefit in 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is available only at a disproportionate cost.

Partial Incapacity

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his proposals to help people who are partially incapable of work.

Mr. Scott: We plan to introduce, from April 1992, a disability employment credit which will help disabled people who are partially incapable of work take up and

return to employment by providing assistance with low earnings similar to that given to families through family credit. We estimate that about 50,000 people might be entitled to this new benefit. The DEC will be available to people receiving a new disability allowance or those who have been receiving invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance or the income support or housing benefit disability premium before starting work, and who satisfy a doctor that they are only partially capable of work. We are also improving incentives to rehabilitation in employment by increasing by £6·50 the therapeutic earnings limit in invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance and by extending invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance to people who undertake an employment rehabilitation course.

Family Income

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the latest available figures for the number of *(a)* one-parent families headed by a woman, *(b)* one-parent families headed by a man and *(c)* two-parent families who rely on (i) state benefits, (ii) earnings from employment, (iii) maintenance payments and (iv) other items as their main source of income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Many families have income from more than one source. The estimates contained in the table are therefore based on families' main source of income.

Estimated numbers of lone parents and two parent families by main source of income

Great Britain

Main source of income	*Lone parent families*	*Two parent families*
Earnings	280,000	4,890,000
State Benefits	700,000	720,000
Maintenance	40,000	20,000
Other items	20,000	60,000

Source:

Family Expenditure Survey 1987. This is a sample survey and may be subject to sampling error. Estimates are approximate only.

The Family Expenditure Survey sample size is small and does not support a reliable analysis of lone parent families separately for families headed by a man and those headed by a woman. Information is therefore for all lone parent families.

Notes:

1. *Earnings:* Defined as earnings from employment and self-employment.
2. *State Benefits:* Includes all types of Social Security Benefits.
3. *Maintenance:* As well as alimony and separation allowances, this also includes allowances for foster children and allowances from friends, relatives, armed forces and Merchant Navy personnel. A further break-down within this category is not possible.
4. *Other items:* Includes for example income from investments.
5. The estimates for numbers dependent on "Maintenance" and "Other items" as the main source of income are based on a very small sample and are therefore subject to a high degree of uncertainty.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the take-up using (i) the expenditure measure and (ii) the case-load measure for *(a)* family income supplement and *(b)* family credit, for the latest years available for each benefit on a consistent basis giving the figures for (1) employees, (2) self-employed and (3) employees and self-employed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information for family credit take-up is for April to December 1988 and is shown in the table. Since 1988 there has been a major TV and press advertising campaign and by the end of September 1989 the caseload had risen to around 320,000 compared with about 280,000 before the advertising began. Estimates of the effect of this campaign on the percentage take-up level cannot be made until information becomes available from the 1989 family expenditure survey about the total eligible population in that year.

	Expenditure-based take-up per cent.	*Caseload-based take-up per cent.*
(a) Family Income Supplement 1985-86	54	48
(b) Family Credit 1988	65	50

Notes:

1. These figures are obtained from the Technical Notes, copies of which are available in the Library.
2. No information is available for the self-employed.
3. Owing to the small sample size, these estimates are subject to sampling error.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the clearance time in days for family income supplement for 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, consistent with table 14.30 in chapter 14 of the Public Expenditure White Paper.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the same basis is available only for 1987-88, when the average clearance time was 16 working days.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the error rates for family income supplement in 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87, and 1987-88, consistent with table 14·31 of chapter 14 of the Public Expenditure White Paper.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Family income supplement error rates were as follows:

	per cent.
1984-85	3·2
1985-86	2·4
1986-87	3·1
1987-88	2·4

However, information on error rates in family income supplement was collected on a less comprehensive and less sophisticated basis than is the case for family credit.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the number of people paying class 3 national insurance contributions and the cost of reducing those contributions in line with his October 1989 reductions for the low paid.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that around 250,000 people pay some voluntary class 3 national insurance contributions each year. The October 1989 contributions changes could not be directly applied to the class 3 rate because voluntary contributions are not earnings related.

Disability

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how his recent proposals on disability benefits will affect people who are blind or partially sighted.

Mr. Scott: A number of proposals set out in "The Way Ahead: benefits for disabled people" (Cm 917) will benefit people who are blind or partially sighted. The new disability allowance, which will extend help to less severely disabled people of working age and below, will benefit people with seeing disabilities who have mobility or care needs. Blind people disabled early in life who have not been able to build up a national insurance contributions record will gain from the introduction of an age-related addition in severe disablement allowance; and those who are partially capable of work will be helped by the new disability employment credit, which will make it easier for disabled people to take up or remain in work. Blind people will also benefit from the following changes to be introduced in April: the extension of mobility allowance to people who are both deaf and blind; the increase, over and above the normal annual increase, in the adult disability premium in income support and housing benefit by £1 for a single person and £1·60 for a couple; and the more than doubling of the disabled child premium in income support and housing benefit, from £6·50 to £15·40 per week. Registered blind people automatically qualify for the disability premiums.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many hours of work and what level of earnings were taken to indicate potential entitlement when his Department analysed Office of Population Censuses and Surveys data for potential recipients of disability employment credit.

Mr. Scott: We propose that the structure of the disability employment credit should follow the main features of family credit, but precise details are being considered. The tentative estimate of 50,000 DEC recipients referred to in "The Way Ahead. Benefits for disabled people" (Cm 917) is consistent with a range of possible entitlement criteria for the number of hours worked and level of earnings.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those disability organisations he has invited to discuss "The Way Ahead" with him.

Mr. Scott: We have sent a copy of "The Way Ahead: benefits for disabed people" (Cm 917) to the following organisations, inviting their comments:

Access Committee for England;
Age Concern;
ARMS;
Arthritis Care;
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus;
Association to Combat Huntingdon's Chorea;
British Diabetic Association;
British Epilepsy Association;
Centre on Environment for the Handicapped;
Disability Alliance;
Disability Benefits Consortium;
Disabled Living Foundation;
Disablement Income Group;
Help the Aged;
Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled;
Leonard Cheshire Foundation;
MENCAP;
MIND;
Motor Neurone Disease Association;
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
National Council for Carers;
Outset;
Parkinson's Disease Association;
RADAR;
RNIB;
RNID;
Scottish Council on Disability;
Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped;
SENSE—National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association;
Spastics Society;
Spinal Injuries Association; and
Wales Council for the Disabled

We will welcome comments from all interested organisations in the course of our detailed work on the proposals, in particular on the new disability allowance and disability employment credit.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to assist disabled pensioners.

Mr. Scott: Measures introduced last October targeted £200 million additional help on less well-off elderly and disabled pensioners. These changes mean that 2·6 million pensioners will gain, by up to £2·50 a week in the case of single people and £3·50 a week for couples. Government proposals to improve the structure of disability benefits set out in "The Way Ahead: benefits for disabled people" (Cm. 917) will also help disabled pensioners by removing the upper age limit for paying for help with mobility needs and extending attendance allowance to people who are terminally ill without any waiting period.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria his Department has used in estimating that 140,000 people will benefit from the lower rate of the proposed disability allowance.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth) on 31 January 1990 at column *193*.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of mobility allowance; how many have been disqualified from receiving the allowance during the past year; and for what reasons the allowance has been dropped.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 19 February 1990]*: The estimated average number receiving mobility allowance during 1989-90 is 615,000. During 1989, 449 recipients of the allowance ceased to qualify because of an improvement in walking ability; 272 because they no longer satisfied the residence and presence conditions; and 82 because they were undergoing imprisonment or detention in legal custody.

Tax and Insurance Demands

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to curtail unannounced visits to farmers by Department of Social Security officials attempting to recover income taxes and national insurance payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Inspectors of the Department of Social Security have a duty to ensure that the Social Security Acts and regulations are being complied with. To achieve this they make visits to employers and self-employed persons. Many of these visits are pre-arranged by telephone and/or letter but some are unannounced. If such a visit is inconvenient arrangements can be made for an alternative meeting. There are no proposals to change or curtail such visiting arrangements.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals to establish a register of gangmasters to provide a point of approach for Department of Social Security officials when serving income tax and national insurance demands; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans to establish such a register of gangmasters. Demands to gangmasters for arrears of their own or their employees' national insurance contributions are normally issued by post to the gangmaster's place of business or home address as appropriate.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions or circulars have been issued by his Department in connection with the ambulance dispute; how, for the purpose of income support claims, his Department categorises the dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No new procedural instructions or circulars in connection with the ambulance dispute have been issued by the Department. Standing guidance on trades disputes is given in chapter 33 of the adjudication officers guide and part 5 of the income support manual. Copies are available in the Library.

Community Charge

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) further to the written answer dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region, etc., whether he will provide in each case an estimate of the numbers receiving housing benefit;

(2) further to the written answer dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region, etc., whether he will provide in each case an estimate of the numbers receiving rate relief.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to the written answer dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region, etc., whether he will provide in each case an estimate of the numbers on family income supplement chargeable to poll tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: For family credit, which has replaced family income supplement, information is available only on the basis of the number of adults in families receiving the benefit, and the only breakdown available is in respect of social security regions. The details are in the table:

Number of adults in family credit families

Social security region	*Number*
North Eastern	94,000
London North	54,000
London South	44,000
Wales and South Western	78,000
Midlands	93,000
North Western	90,000
Scotland	62,000

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out, for each week since the start of January this year, the number of applications which have been made for community charge/poll tax benefit; the number which have been accepted; the amounts of benefit awarded as between (i) up to 50p per week, (ii) 50p to £1 per week, (iii) £1 to £2 per week, (iv) £2 to £5 per week, (v) £5 to £10 per week and (vi) over £10 a week; and if he will provide a classification of successful applicants as between *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* lone parents, *(c)* unemployed persons, *(d)* sick or disabled persons, *(e)* low wage earners and *(f)* other categories.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Social Security Spending

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) 15 January, *Official Report*, column *120*, regarding his Department's expenditure, (1) if he will give his estimate of each year's increase in expenditure accounted for by *(a)* an increase in the number of claimants and *(b)* a real-terms increase in benefit levels;

(2) what has been the expenditure change in real terms between 1978-79 and 1989-90, for each of the beneficiary groups in table 14.9 at chapter 14 of the public expenditure White Paper, resulting from *(a)* an increase in the number of claimants and *(b)* increases in the real terms level of benefits; and, in relation to the elderly, what percentage in the real terms increase in benefit levels is attributable to the state earnings-related pensions scheme.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 29 January 1990]:* Increases in expenditure brought about by the introduction of new benefits and enhancements to existing benefits do not always fall neatly into the categories *(a)* and *(b)*. Factors such as the growing number of married women claiming contributory benefits can increase claimant numbers but produce an apparent fall in real average payments, whereas the reality is that the household's real income from social security is higher than it would have been previously. For this reason it would be disproportionately costly to devote resources to an attempt to give most of the information requested.

Between 1978-79 and 1989-90, 2·6 out of the 24 per cent. real increase in benefit expenditure on the elderly, and 2·9 out of the 34 per cent. real increase in total spending on benefits, is attributable to the commencement and growth of spending on additional pensions with contributory benefits.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the social security benefits that are available, categorised under *(a)* contributory benefits, *(b)* non-contributory benefits, *(c)* means-tested benefits, *(d)* discretionary benefits, *(e)* other benefits and *(f)* employer-funded benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The main social security benefits are shown as

follows. Employer-funded benefits are not listed separately as they cover a wide range of contingencies including occupational pension schemes, redundancy payments, death benefits, maternity provision and private health schemes. Benefits in category *(c)* (income related) are also non-contributory.

(a) Contributory
- Sickness Benefit
- Invalidity Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Retirement Pension
- Unemployment Benefit
- Widow's Payment
- Widowed Mother's Allowance
- Widow's Pension.

(b) Non-contributory
- Child Benefit
- One Parent Benefit
- Guardian's Allowance
- Severe Disablement
- Industrial Injuries
- Disablement Benefit
- Over 80 Pension
- Reduced Earnings Allowance
- Retirement Allowance
- Industrial Death Benefit
- War Widow's or Dependants' Pension
- Attendance Allowance
- Invalid Care Allowance
- Mobility Allowance
- Lump Sum for Vaccine Damage
- War Disablement Pension
- Workmen's Compensation Supplement
- Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefit
- Social Fund (Funeral, Maternity and Cold Weather Payments).

(c) Income-Related
- Income Support
- Family Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Rent/Rate Rebate
- Community Charge Benefit
- Help with National Health Service charges.

(d) Discretionary
- Social Fund (Community Care Grants, Budgeting and Crisis Loans).

(e) Other
- Statutory Sick Pay
- Statutory Maternity Pay.

Community Charge

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of extending the capital cut-off limit for community charge rebate scheme to £8,000 for spouses rather than for each couple.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on 22 February 1990.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Horse Exports

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had about checks at ports and airports in the United Kingdom post-1992 in respect of the export of live horses.

Mr. Maclean: There have been many representations for the retention of existing horse export controls after 1992.

Food Safety

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of his allocation for food safety research in 1989-90 had been spent as of 12 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not readily available but we estimate that in 1989-90 the Department will spend the moneys allocated to research and development on food safety and applied nutrition.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his spending of £8·5 million on food safety research in 1989-90 includes work on food spoilage and applied nutrition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. The Department's food safety research programme includes work on applied nutrition and spoilage organisms which are detrimental to the quality of food.

Food Surpluses (Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the amount of special sales agreed by the European Economic Community over the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will list the nations to which these food exports were sent and the average price of such sales in terms of pence per pound.

Mr. Curry: At any one time CAP arrangements provide for a number of sales schemes from intervention and from the open market. These tend to follow established patterns. However, the following sales to non-EC countries, agreed over the last 12 months, have distinguishing features:

Date	*Destination*	*Commodity*	*Quantity(t)*	*Price (pence per pound)*
February 1989	USSR	Wheat	900,000	3·7
March 1989	Poland	Barley	27,121	3·4
March 1989	USSR/Poland/other destinations	Wheat	1,047,211	[1]4·1-4·3
April 1989	Poland	Barley	21,561	3·6
April 1989	Poland	Wheat	67,706	4·3
April 1989	USSR/Poland/other destinations	Wheat	233,305	[1]4·3
October 1989	USSR	Barley	1,244,550	3·3
November 1989	USSR	Wheat	980,000	4·3

Date	*Destination*	*Commodity*	*Quantity(t)*	*Price (pence per pound)*
December 1989	USSR	Barley	1,620,000	3·7
January 1990	USSR	Wheat	3,220,000	4·1
February 1990	Eastern Europe and USSR	Rice	12,150	8·4

The table above does not include goods exported free of charge as part of either the Community's food aid programme or the package of measures recently agreed to assist countries in Eastern Europe.

[1] The quantities destined for the USSR and Poland (which it is not possible separately to identify) benefited from an additional subsidy of 0·14 pence per pound.

Tobacco

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total production of tobacco in the European Economic Community in each of the five most recent annual periods for which figures are available; what has been the cost to the European Economic Community of supporting the production and storage or purchase of tobacco in each of these years; and what has been the total expenditure in disposing of tobacco by means of exports to other nations in each of those years.

Mr. Curry: Total production of tobacco in the European Economic Community is shown in the table:

	Tonnes	
1984	348,610	EC10
1985	360,171	EC10
1986	382,818	EC12
1987	383,277	EC12
1988	395,014	EC12

Expenditure on a given harvest impinges on the following year's budget. A breakdown of expenditure on the 1984 to 1988 harvests is shown in the table:

Year	*Total expenditure (mecu)*	*Premia (mecu)*	*Intervention (mecu)*	*Export refunds (mecu)*
1985[1]	863	819	12	32
1986[1]	782	734	16	32
1987[2]	804	732	27	43
1988[2]	966	895	28	43
1989[2]	1,139	972	105	62

[1] EC10
[2] EC12

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been taken to reduce the expenditure of the European Economic Community on tobacco production and storage.

Mr. Curry: An agricultural stabiliser was introduced in the tobacco sector in 1988. It achieved a saving of 11 million ecu for its first year of operation.

Recent price-fixing decisions have resulted in reductions in prices and premia for the less marketable varieties. Measures to restrict and control intervention have also been introduced. However, existing market management measures have not been as effective as we would have wished. The Commission has shown a welcome determination to tackle the costs of the tobacco regime. In the current price-fixing discussions we are pressing for even more effective steps to promote budgetary discipline.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the tobacco grown within the European Economic Community is of *(a)* the high tar and *(b)* the low tar variety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: European Community production of the high tar varieties represented 65 per cent. of the 1988 harvest, with low tar varieties representing 35 per cent.

We are concerned to ensure that support given to the tobacco regime does not undermine efforts being made under the Europe against Cancer programme to reduce the incidence of disease and early death attributable to smoking. The Commission's plan of action under this programme stresses the need to reduce production and redirect it towards varieties which are least harmful to health. One consequence of recent reductions in support for the less-marketable and higher tar varieties has been a 25 per cent. fall in production of some of these since 1987. The maximum tar directive, which will probably be adopted in May this year, will limit the tar content of cigarettes marketed in the European Community to 15 mg by 1992 and 12 mg by 1997 and contribute considerably towards limiting production of these varieties.

We shall continue to press for measures directed at reorientation of production towards the more marketable and lower tar varieties.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of Community-produced tobacco which was used for consumption *(a)* within the European Economic Community and *(b)* outside the European Economic Community in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: There are no data available on the consumption of European Community raw tobacco. However, in 1988 the Community produced 395,014 tonnes and exported 149,869 tonnes to third countries.

Food Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the increase in retail food prices over the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and what estimate he has made of the increase in retail food prices which will stem from the elimination of the green pound differential.

Mr. Curry: In the year to January 1990 the food component of the retail price index rose by 8 per cent. The Government are committed to eliminating the monetary gap associated with the green pound by the end of 1992 at the latest. The effect of devaluing the green pound will depend on movements in the market rate for sterling over this period. As a broad guide, elimination of the present monetary gap by devaluation of the green pound might add some 1 to 1·5 per cent. to retail food prices on average.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has reached a decision on setting up the central veterinary laboratory and the veterinary medicines directorate as executive agencies.

Mr. Gummer: The feasibility studies set in hand by my predecessor following his written reply of 20 April 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townsend) have now been concluded. I am satisfied in the light of these studies that setting up the central veterinary laboratory and the veterinary medicines directorate, both at Weybridge, as executive agencies will bring benefits in terms of further increases in the efficiency and effectiveness with which these two parts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food conduct their business on behalf of customers in other parts of the Ministry and outside it. I accordingly propose to launch the two agencies with effect from April next. I propose to appoint Dr. T. W. A. Little as chief executive of the central veterinary laboratory and Dr. J. M. Rutter, the present director of the veterinary medicines directorate, as its chief executive.

North Sea Dumping

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licence applications have been made over the past five years to the Oslo commission by the British Government to allow the dumping of wastes in the North sea; and what was the nature of the wastes in question.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 13 February, *Official Report*, at column *199*. Since that date information has been submitted to the Oslo commission on a fifth waste, a chalk solution from sugar refining.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, by works and by geographical location, the sources of the most significant volumes and tonnages of materials dumped under licence in the North sea over the past five years.

Mr. Curry: Most of the material dumped from the United Kingdom under licence in the North sea in the past five years has been material dredged from ports and harbours. The most significant volumes (in excess of 1 million tonnes per annum) have been dredged from the firth of Forth, the Tees, the Humber and the Harwich. Stone from certain collieries on the Durham and Northumberland coast has also been dumped at sea in quantities exceeding 1 million tonnes per annum.

Three quarters of the sewage sludge dumped came from London. More than half the volume of liquid industrial waste disposed of at sea was from the ICI works at Billingham.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements exist for the monitoring of the effects of industrial waste dumping in the seas around Britain.

Mr. Curry: Monitoring is undertaken at least every two years in all disposal sites for solid industrial waste and in or close to all sites for liquid industrial waste. In addition there is a separate programme for surveillance of water quality of coastal areas. The Ministry also undertakes a programme of surveillance of quality of fish and shellfish in coastal waters and there is a continuing programme of assessment of fish disease in United Kingdom waters.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy for each county of England and Wales for the four-week period ended 16 February.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

County	*Number*
Avon	20
Bedfordshire	3
Berkshire	6
Buckinghamshire	10
Cambridgeshire	6
Cheshire	26
Cleveland	1
Clwyd	7
Cornwall	50
Cumbria	14
Derbyshire	5
Devon	60
Dorset	63
Dyfed	27
Essex	5
Glamorgan South	1
Gloucestershire	26
Gwent	6
Gwynedd	1
Hampshire	44
Hereford and Worcester	18
Hertfordshire	5
Humberside	6
Isle of Wight	2
Kent	30
Lancashire	6
Leicestershire	30
Lincolnshire	11
London	2
Manchester	1
Norfolk	13
Northamptonshire	4
Northumberland	1
Nottinghamshire	2
Oxfordshire	22
Powys	5
Shropshire	27
Somerset	67
Staffordshire	18
Suffolk	10
Surrey	9
Sussex East	14
Sussex West	29
West Midlands	1
Warwickshire	15
Wiltshire	71
Yorkshire North	31
Yorkshire South	2
Yorkshire West	5
Total	838

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of bovines which have been identified since 30 September 1989 as bovine spongiform encephalopathy suspects at *(a)* slaughterhouses and *(b)* livestock markets; and of these how many were subsequently confirmed as bovine spongiform encephalopathy cases.

Mr. Maclean: The information for the quarter October to December 1989 is as follows:

Location	*Number reported*	*Number confirmed*
Slaughterhouses	22	21
Markets	20	15

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what records he keeps in respect of cattle infected with BSE; whether he now records the movement of progeny of BSE-infected cattle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: For each suspected case of BSE, the Ministry collects information necessary to study the epidemiology of the disease, including breeding history, feeding records and clinical history.

Movements of all cattle must be recorded in accordance with the Movement of Animals (Records) Order 1960 (as amended).

Rabies

Mr. Warren: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of deaths due to rabies in each of the countries of the European Community during each of the last five years for which data are available.

Mr. Maclean: During the last five years there have been five human deaths from rabies and in every case the disease was acquired in other parts of the world. The details are as follows:

Year	*Country*	*Where acquired*
1986	West Germany	India
1987	United Kingdom	India
1988	Belgium	Zaire
1988	United Kingdom	Bangladesh
1988	United Kingdom	Pakistan

Source: WHO Rabies Bulletin Europe.

Turkeys

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has received from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society about the number of inspections made on its behalf of turkey-rearing units owned by companies that compound their own foodstuffs to ascertain whether they are complying with the law relating to antibiotics.

Mr. Maclean: In 1989 inspectors of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain made 925 visits to premises registered for the manufacture of medicated feedingstuffs. It is not possible to identify separately how many of these were to turkey rearing units.

DEFENCE

Foreign Exchange Costs

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the estimated foreign exchange costs, both direct and indirect, of the British forces in *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(b)* Cyprus and *(c)* Gibraltar for the last 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated direct foreign expenditure costs of the British forces in Cyprus and Gibraltar in 1989-90 are some £100 million and £50 million respectively. In respect of the foreign exchange costs of British Forces Germany, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 10 January 1990, at column *633*. No reliable estimate can be made of the foreign exchange content of sterling expenditure in connection with these forces.

Air Misses

Mr Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses were recorded in the airspace over, and in the vicinity of, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Neubert: Two such air misses were reported in this period.

Private Security Firms

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many private security firms have had their contracts with his Department terminated prematurely as a result of unsatisfactory performance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have terminated a total of three contracts with private security firms prematurely as a result of unsatisfactory performance. Only two firms have been involved, however.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *430*, if he will list the defence establishments at which the private security firms are currently deployed in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Ireland and *(d)* Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to give details of security arrangements at individual defence establishments.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the critera used by his Department to determine which establishments should be guarded by private security firms.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to disclose the criteria used to determine which MOD establishments should be guarded by private security firms.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the procedures for monitoring the performance of private security firms employed by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All contracts held by private security firms employed by the MOD are subject to monthly assessment by the Department. Companies that consistently fail to meet their contractual obligations will have their contracts terminated.

Bishopton ROF

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place with the Defence Police Federation in connection with the proposed withdrawal of Ministry of Defence police from Royal Ordnance Bishopton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The decision to withdraw Ministry of Defence police from Royal Ordnance Bishopton in June this year was taken in December 1989. The Defence Police Federation was informed immediately, and so was given six months' notice of withdrawal. It sought a meeting with officials which took place on 15 December at which the reasons for withdrawal were explained to it. There will be no redundancies among MDP officers as a result of the withdrawal as all officers concerned will be redeployed.

"Clockwork Orange"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communication his Department had with General Sir Peter Leng, former Land Forces Commander in Northern Ireland, on Saturday 17 February, after learning from Mr. James Adam that General Leng had made a statement about the sanctioning of Clockwork Orange.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: General Sir Peter Leng informed MOD officials on Saturday 17 February that he had no reason to disagree with any statements recently issued by Ministers concerning Clockwork Orange or other matters pertinent to the case of Mr. Wallace.

Running Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current annual cost of maintaining Royal Navy vessels in the Caribbean;

(2) what is the current annual running cost of the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not practicable to separate the costs of individual fleet tasks, since financial provision for manpower, fuel, supplies and other items is made to cover the operations of the fleet as a whole.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual running cost of the Army detachment stationed in Belize.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost of maintaining an Army garrison in Belize in 1989-90 is £18 million. This includes a small element for capital costs.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual running cost of the Royal Air Force detachment stationed in Belize.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost of maintaining a Royal Air Force detachment in Belize in 1989-90 is £11 million.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current average annual running costs of *(a)* a Buccaneer strike/attack squadron, *(b)* a Jaguar offensive support squadron, *(c)* a Nimrod maritime patrol squadron and *(d)* a Tornado F3 air defence squadron.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The approximate annual running cost of a Buccaneer strike/attack squadron is £33·74 million; for a Jaguar offensive support squadron £30·63 million; for a Nimrod maritime patrol squadron £35·33 million; and for a Tornado F3 air defence squadron £49·76 million.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual cost of *(a)* a regular Army soldier, *(b)* a Territorial Army soldier, *(c)* a Royal Navy sailor, *(d)* a Royal Naval Reserve sailor, *(e)* a Royal Air Force airman and *(f)* a Royal Auxiliary Air Force airman.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the figures for the average annual running costs of a Tornado GR1 squadron and a Challenger regiment provided on page 48 of the 4th report of the Defence Committee, HC 383, Session 1988-89, include both units based in the United Kingdom and those in West Germany;

(2) whether the figures for the average annual running costs of units provided on page 48 of the 4th report of the Defence Committee, HC 383, Session 1988-89, include those Royal Navy units undergoing refit or on standby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current annual running cost of *(a)* an armoured regiment, *(b)* an infantry battalion and *(c)* an artillery field regiment stationed in the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the current annual running cost of *(a)* an armoured regiment, *(b)* an infantry battalion, *(c)* an artillery field regiment and *(d)* an Army Air Corps regiment stationed with the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Running costs vary according to a unit's composition and its precise task at the time. Running costs for 1989-90, to the nearest £ million, are as follows:

	British Army of the Rhine £ million	*United Kingdom £ million*
Armoured regiment	13	13
Infantry battalion	15	11 to 13
Artillery field regiment	13 to 16	14
Army Air Corps regiment	21	—

These figures are at current prices. They do not include civilian support costs.

Military Training

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the combined acreage of land used for military training in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Military training in Scotland takes place on 24,659 acres of land in Ministry of Defence ownership. In addition we have training rights, in some cases very limited, over a further 173,280 acres.

Harrier GR5

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Harrier GR5s have been delivered to date.

Mr. Alan Clark: A total of 57 Harrier GR5s have been delivered. This figures includes two prototypes.

Nimrod AEW

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which year the first Nimrod AEW aircraft was originally intended to come into service.

Mr. Alan Clark: Nimrod AEW should have entered RAF service for training in 1982 and for operations in 1984.

IUKADGE Command and Control

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the exact amount of the cost implications of the delay to the introduction of the IUKADGE command and control system, referred to in his answer of 26 June 1989, *Official Report*, column *370*.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member's earlier question on this subject, *Official Report*, 6 July 1989, column *266*.

AWACS

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of the E-3 AWACS programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The E-3 AWACS programme is proceeding in accordance with the schedule announced to the House of Commons in 1986. Delivery of the first aircraft will be made in early 1991.

Foxhunter Radar

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Foxhunter radar yet performs according to the original specifications given when it was ordered.

Mr. Alan Clark: Work on improving Foxhunter is well in hand. Radars to an agreed interim standard continue to be delivered for installation in the Tornado ADV by the RAF, providing an operational capability superior to that of the equipment being replaced. These will shortly be followed by radars to the full technical standard.

SCOTLAND

NHS Expenditure

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about growth in expenditure on the National Health Service since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland has grown from £1,064 million in 1979-80 to a planned £3,064 million in 1990-91, an increase of 36 per cent. in real terms.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce regulations to prevent the use of information for purposes other than those associated with the management or collection of the community charge, which has been disclosed to a charging authority by a community charges registration officer for the purpose associated with the community charge; what other duties there are for a community charge registration officer or charging authority to use or disclose community charge data for other purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The community charges register is available for inspection to the extent specified and for the purposes set out in section 20 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and in the Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 1988. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to change these arrangements.

Section 20C of the 1987 Act which was inserted by the 1989 Act requires community charges registration officers to supply to the Secretary of State, on request, information that was obtained by them for the purpose of carrying out their functions, provided that the information is not personal information as defined in that section. The section also provides that regulations may permit registration officers to supply such information to any person on request and may charge a prescribed fee for doing so. No regulations under this section have yet been made.

Self-governing Schools

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of those schools in Strathclyde region which are eligible to apply for self-governing status.

Mr. Lang: Any education authority school, other than a nursery school, for which a school board is established is eligible to call a ballot of parents on self-governing status. Information on which individual schools have boards is not held centrally, but provisional figures for Strathclyde suggest that almost all secondary schools, nine out of 10 primary schools and half the special schools in the region are eligible.

Legal Reforms

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on his reforms for *(a)* administration of estates and *(b)* multi-disciplinary practices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend received 27 responses to his 1989 consultation paper "The Legal Profession in Scotland" which made reference to the confirmation of executors which is the only part of the administration of estates reserved to solicitors. He received 24 responses to his proposals for multi-disciplinary practices as set out in his 1987 discussion document "The Practice of the Solicitor Profession in Scotland". He has also received a number of representations about the provisions of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill which relate to confirmation of executors and multi-disciplinary practices.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has conducted into the effect of the proposed legal reforms on rural practices.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has conducted into the effect of the proposed legal reforms on rural practices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the right hon. and hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 18 January 1990.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has received to his proposals for multi-disciplinary practices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend invited views on proposals to remove the existing statutory barriers which prevent solicitors from entering into multi-disciplinary practices in his consultative paper "The Practice of the Solicitor Profession in Scotland", which was published in November 1987. Twenty-four organisations and individuals, mainly from the legal, financial and property sectors, submitted responses.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met members of the Scottish Law Society to discuss legal reform.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend meets members of the Law Society of Scotland from time to time, both formally and informally, for discussions on a wide range of topics. The last such formal occasion was his address to the Society's special conference on his policy statement "The Scottish Legal Profession: The Way Forward" on 23 October 1989.

Conveyancing

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what responses he has received from Scottish-based organisations regarding conveyancing reform.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what responses he has received from Scottish-based organisations regarding conveyancing reform.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Thirty Scottish-based organisations, mainly from the legal, financial and property sectors, responded to the proposals on conveyancing in the consultation paper "The Legal Profession in Scotland", published in March 1989.

Nurses

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many student nurses qualified in the summer of 1989; and how many of them now have nursing posts within the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the period 1 May to 30 September 1989 1,111 students in Scotland qualified for registration as first level nurses. Information on how many of them entered the National Health Service is not held centrally.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the regrading of nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Nurses in clinical practice were regraded with effect from 1 April 1988. The new grading structure for senior nurse education posts was introduced with effect from 1 April 1989. A new grading structure for senior nurse management posts is currently being negotiated with the staff side.

Illegal Poisoning

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been involving the use of poisons against wildlife in each of the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Disability

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those disability organisations he has met in the past year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has not met formally any of the disability organisations in the past year, but he launched the Scottish Council on Disability's computerised information service on 19 May 1989 and on 30 May 1989 he launched from the esplanade of Edinburgh castle the International Spinal Research Trust's "PUSH-2" event—a five-week wheelchair push to London by three young paraplegics. On 1 December 1989 my hon. Friend the Minister of State opened the Scottish Council on Disability's new mobile advice centre. On 22 January 1990 he opened a conference on care in the community at which disabled organisations were represented.

Scottish Office officials are in regular contact with many of the organisations representing people with disabilities.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional budget allocation he has made for provision for the disabled in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for services for the disabled is a matter for health boards and local authorities within the resources available to them. Provision for hospital and community health expenditure by health boards has been increased by 8·3 per cent. and revenue support grants to local authorities by 7·5 per cent. for next year.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has any unit or civil servant specifically allocated to the task of ensuring provision for the disabled in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: One branch of the Scottish Home and Health Department has a co-ordinating role for matters relating to the physically disabled but functional topics are dealt with by officials in the various Departments which comprise the Scottish Office.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of electors on the current electoral registers, published on 15 February 1990, in each of the parliamentary constituencies in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information, which will be published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in its EL series of monitors, is not yet available centrally.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of electors on the current electoral registers, published on 15 February 1990, in each regional electoral division and in each district ward in each of the local government areas of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information will be available in April. I will send it to the hon. Member as soon as it is ready, and place a copy in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons are homeless in each of the district council areas.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The only figures available relate to the number of applicants assessed as homeless by local authorities under part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, which will not be equal to the numbers currently homeless. These figures, as recorded by local authorities, are given in the following table:

Applicants assessed as homeless under Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 by district, Scotland, 1988-89

District	*Number*
Borders	
Berwickshire	6
Ettrick and Lauderdale	21
Roxburgh	29
Tweeddale	n/a
Central	
Clackmannan	17
Falkirk	458
Stirling	158
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	48
Nithsdale	144
Stewartry	21
Wigtown	55
Fife	
Dunfermline	254
Kirkcaldy	258
North East Fife	88
Grampian	
Aberdeen	625
Banff and Buchan	111
Gordon	36
Kincardine and Deeside	8
Moray	41
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	—
Caithness	12
Inverness	51
Lochaber	22
Nairn	16
Ross and Cromarty	18
Skye and Lochalsh	20
Sutherland	8
Lothian	
East Lothian	355
Edinburgh	1,167
Midlothian	87
West Lothian	119
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	96
Bearsden and Milngavie	26
Clydebank	632
Clydesdale	8
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	89
Cumnock and Doon Valley	38
Cunninghame	147
Dumbarton	461
East Kilbride	132
Eastwood	7
Glasgow	1,312
Hamilton	82
Inverclyde	111
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	147
Kyle and Carrick	294
Monklands	214
Motherwell	121
Renfrew	261
Strathkelvin	91
Tayside	
Angus	177
Dundee	403
Perth and Kinross	98
Islands Councils	
Orkney Islands	n/a
Shetland Islands	63
Western Isles	37

Off Licences

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received calling for the Sunday opening of off-sales licensed premises; and if he will list the organisations making these representations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Home and Health Department has received 50 representations from organisations and from individuals in favour of allowing off-sales licensed premises to open on Sunday in Scotland. The organisations making these representations were as follows:

Strathclyde Licensed Trade Association
British Retailers Association
Delting Community Council
Arbroath Community Council
Lossiemouth Community Council
East Lothian Licensing Board
Kirriemuir Community Council
Wigtown Licensing Board
St. Andrew's and Deerness Community Council
Law Society of Scotland
Midlothian Licensing Board
Headteachers' Association of Scotland
Falkirk Licensing Board
Tollcross Community Council
Annandale and Eskdale District Council
Eskbank Trading Post
Clackmannan District Council
Clydebank District Council
North East Fife District Licensing Board
Scottish Licensed Trade Association
Scottish Consumer Council
Bearsden and Milngavie District Council
Cumnock and Doon Valley District Licensing Board
Kirkcaldy District Council
Kincardine and Deeside District Council
Salsburgh Community Council
Greenhills Community Council
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland
Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Stakis plc
City of Dundee Licensing Board
Kyle and Carrick District Council
Stirling District Council
Midlothian District Council
Berwickshire District Council
MacArthur Stewart and Company
Co-operative Union Ltd.
Stewartry District Council and Licensing Board
Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)
Edinburgh District Licensing Board
South Ronaldsay and Burray Community Council
Banff and Buchan District Council
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council
Scottish Grocers' Federation
Scotch Whisky Association

Eye Tests

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's monitoring of the effects of the introduction of charges for eyesight checks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures on the number of National Health Service sight tests carried out between 1 April and 31 December 1989 will shortly be available. The results of a survey on the total number of sight tests carried out in Scotland in the first quarter of 1990 compared with earlier periods should be available by the early summer.

Dental Checks

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the results of his Department's monitoring of the effects of the introduction of charges for dental checks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total number of courses of dental treatment scheduled for payment in Scotland in the calendar year 1989 was 3,144,000. The corresponding figure for 1988 was 3,054,000. There is no evidence that the introduction on 1 January 1989 of the charge for a dental examination has deterred people from seeking dental treatment.

Police

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the ratio of police officers to population in *(a)* Aberdeen, *(b)* Dundee, *(c)* Edinburgh and *(d)* Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the ratios set out in the table no account has been taken of police offices, for example, engaged on CID and traffic duties who have responsibilities over areas wider than those specified, and the figures do not provide a sound basis for comparing the level of policing provided in the areas concerned.

Area	*Ratio*
Aberdeen	1:433
Dundee	1:406
Edinburgh	1:343
Glasgow	1:298

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the ratio of police officers to population in Cumbernauld, Glenrothes, Irvine, Livingston and East Kilbride.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the ratios set out in the table, no account has been taken of police officers, for example, engaged on CID and traffic duties who have responsibilities over areas wider than those specified, and the figures do not provide a sound basis for comparing the level of policing provided in the areas concerned.

Area	*Ratio*
Cumbernauld	1:666
Glenrothes	1:459
Irvine	1:411
Livingston	1:668
East Kilbride	1:711

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State of Scotland when he next expects to meet the trade unions representing ambulance staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such meeting arranged.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State last visited Cumbernauld; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I paid a housing visit to Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council on Friday 16 February. During the visit I announced a supplementary HRA capital allocation for 1989-90 for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council of £0·200 million. I also noted the district council's representations about its provisional housing capital allocations for 1990-91 and undertook to keep these in mind when final capital allocations for housing are determined in March.

Rateable Values

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will provide for the districts of Eastwood and Renfrew, and for Scotland, the number and rateable value of houses, etc., immediately prior to the introduction of the community charge with rateable values in the following bands: *(a)* up to £300, *(b)* £301 to £600, *(c)* £601 to £900, *(d)* £901 to £1,200, *(e)* £1,201 to £1,500 and *(f)* over £1,500.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is set out in the table.

Domestic rateable subjects at 1 April 1988

Bands of Rateable Value	*Eastwood*	*Renfrew*	*Scotland*
£0-£300			
Number	20	3,018	92,208
Rateable Value (£)	4,769	690,126	18,536,701
£301-£600			
Number	1,535	32,981	977,803
Rateable Value (£)	797,321	16,298,156	469,876,982
£601-£900			
Number	6,065	31,647	690,653
Rateable Value (£)	4,626,100	22,776,083	490,089,150
£901-£1,200			
Number	6,961	7,958	189,542
Rateable Value (£)	7,240,368	8,116,213	195,189,046
£1,201-£1,500			
Number	3,160	2,770	72,356
Rateable Value (£)	4,203,661	3,680,946	95,936,291
Over £1,500			
Number	3,608	1,985	45,661
Rateable Value (£)	6,905,634	3,543,330	83,352,425
Croft houses/Separately assessed caravans			
Number	7	81	21,501
Rateable Value (£)	1,617	27,446	4,848,297
TOTAL			
Number	21,356	80,440	2,089,724
Rateable Value (£)	23,779,470	55,132,300	1,357,828,892

British Steel

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an economic assessment of the total impact on jobs and industrial production of the closure of British Steel's production operations in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: British Steel has put forward no proposals for the closure of its production operations in Scotland, and Sir Robert Scholey has recently confirmed that his December 1987 statement on the future of the Scottish steel plants still stands. The closure of British Steel plants in Scotland would, of course, have serious consequences for the economy of Lanarkshire in particular.

Electricity

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the relative prices of generating electricity expressed in pence per kilowatt hour of the different means of power generation available to the Scottish electricity boards;

(2) what are the latest cost estimates from the South of Scotland Electricity Board for advanced gas-cooled reactor generated power from Scottish power stations;

(3) what are the latest price estimates prepared by the South of Scotland Electricity Board, expressed in pence per kilowatt hour, of advanced gas-cooled reactor generated power from Hunterston B and Torness power stations; and what are the assumptions on which these estimates are based.

Mr. Lang: Information on the generation costs and the quantity of electricity sent out from the principal forms of power generation used by the Scottish electricity boards is contained in their annual reports. Details of expenditure and output relating to individual power stations are operational and commercial matters for the boards.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment he has made on the impact on the Scottish economy of proposed gas-powered electricity generation stations located in the north-east of England; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made on the likely impact on electricity exports from Scotland of the proposed projects to build gas-powered electricity generating capacity in the north-east of England;

(3) what meetings or discussions he has held with the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board on its participation in the Neptune consortium; on what date he first learned of the project; if the board sought his approval for its involvement; and if he will make a statement;

(4) when he was informed by the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board of British Steel's participation in the Neptune consortium.

Mr. Lang: I welcome the recent reports of consideration being given to possible developments on Teesside involving the exploitation of natural gas available from the North sea. Such developments are clearly of enormous importance for the United Kingdom economy as a whole and strongly indicate the Government's objective of encouraging competition in both electricity supply and in gas production.

The possible involvement of the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board in one of these developments would utilise its long experience in design, construction and operation of major power stations, such as Peterhead, where the board has already taken the lead in gas-fired generation, and provide long-term employment for its skilled staff. In addition, Scottish-based companies will be well placed to participate in the supply of major components for construction of the plant. There is, therefore, every reason to suppose that the Scottish economy will benefit from these opportunities.

I understand that these developments would involve supplies of electricity dedicated to certain large consumers. The potential for the Scottish electricity industry to offer supplies to the system in England and Wales by means of the transmission grid interconnector therefore remains.

Discussions on these developments are at a very early stage but, given the lengthy gestation period for projects of this nature, it is appropriate for the board now to be considering opportunities to expand its business after privatisation.

The North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board informed me earlier this month of its intention to consider its involvement in the potential development and of various aspects of the development, including the identity of possible large customers. The proposals are not yet at a stage at which any formal consents are required and consequently no approvals have been sought.

Buses

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to ensure fair competition between competing employee-based bids under paragraph 15 of the Scottish Bus Group disposal programme he has prepared under section 1 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The disposal programme sets out the basis on which the Scottish Transport Group is required to consider bids, including the information required in bids and the basis on which a preference will be given to bids involving employee participation. My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the arrangements will ensure fair competition between all bids.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to ensure sustained and fair competition under section 2 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 1989 where there is an association between the management of neighbouring companies after privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The basis on which bids for Scottish Bus Group companies will be considered is set out in the disposal programme which my right hon. and learned Friend recently published under the Transport (Scotland) Act 1989. Copies of the disposal programme are available in the House of Commons Library. Any mergers between bus companies after privatisation will be subject to competition law.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation he intends to undertake with employees in relation to privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group where there are competing bids involving a controlling interest by employees for a particular subsidiary.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. It is the responsibility of the Scottish Transport Group to implement the disposal programme for the Scottish Bus Group. The disposal programme makes it clear that a price preference will be given to bids involving a controlling interest by employees, and that there could be more than one such employee-based bid. The group is required to seek my right hon. and learned Friend's consent for sales.

Courts

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Lord Advocate will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for East Lothian dated 4 January about reporting restrictions on a case at Haddington sheriff court.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate will be writing to the hon. Member shortly.

Child Care

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that people and their spouses running private facilities for children are vetted to record any criminal records.

Mr. Lang: Regional and islands authorities are responsible under the Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act 1948 for registering child care establishments and childminders. Enhanced arrangements for vetting those who have substantial access to children were introduced in September 1989 and applicants for registration as private child care providers will be vetted for criminal convictions by the Scottish Criminal Records Office at the request of the regional or islands authority as registration authority. The authority also has discretion to request checks on other persons who may have substantial access to children.

Private Security Firms

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that staff employed by private security firms are vetted to record any criminal records.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The responsibility for ensuring that appropriate background checks are made on employees rests with individual companies.

Dentistry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the new dental hospital for Edinburgh is expected to come into commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This depends upon the outcome of Lothian health board's forthcoming appraisal of possible sites.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Scottish Office is prepared to provide the necessary earmarked capital and recurrent expenditure to support the university of Edinburgh's postgraduate dental institute, for which proposals were put to him in December.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have already made it clear that the Government will meet the capital cost of the proposed institute. The revenue aspects will require detailed consultation with all the parties involved, once we have the results of the appraisal to be conducted by Lothian health board.

Child Workers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that a survey be conducted of the extent to which children are missing their education through working in paid employment during school hours or through tiredness due to hours worked outwith school hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* Children in employment are protected by the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, which defines the lowest age (13) at which a child may be employed, precludes employment during school hours and limits the hours and times of day a child may work. In addition, education authorities are empowered to make byelaws imposing further restraints. The existing safeguards, if properly applied, are sufficient to prevent problems of school absence or tiredness and I do not think a survey would be helpful.

Higher Education

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female higher education students in Scotland; and how many of them come from low income families.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* In 1988-89 there were 46,085 male and 38,883 female undergraduate and postgraduate students in higher education in Scotland. The family income of these students is not available.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been recorded since 1988 in Scotland; and if he will list them by regional areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* Bovine spongiform encephalopathy was made notifiable on 21 June 1988. To date 277 confirmed cases have been recorded in Scotland. A breakdown of cases on a regional basis is as follows:

	Number
Borders	10
Central	12
Dumfries	50
Fife	12
Grampian	60
Highland	17
Lothian	9
Orkney	4
Shetland	1
Strathclyde	81
Tayside	21

Milk Production

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cows are registered for milk production in Scotland; and how many in Renfrewshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* At June 1989 there were 363,458 dairy cows in Scotland of which 246,570 were producing milk and 8,735 dairy cows in the old administrative county of Renfrewshire of which 5,261 were producing milk.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the milk production for Scotland in 1987, 1988 and 1989; and what is the milk production for farms in Renfrewshire in the years 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* Milk production figures for Scotland and the old administrative county of Renfrewshire are detailed in the table. These figures relate to the period, 1 April to 31 March for each of the years concerned.

	Scotland million litres	*Renfrewshire million litres*
1986-87	1,301·2	42·8
1987-88	1,235·0	40·0
1988-89	1,192·9	39·2

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration was given in the calculation of the allocation of funds to Lothian health board for 1990-91 to *(a)* clearing the deficit from the current year and *(b)* avoiding the creation of a new deficit in 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* The prime determinant in health boards' allocations is the population for whom the board has to provide hospital and community health services. Account is taken of factors such as the age, sex and morbidity of each board's population. Allowance is also made for the movement of patients between boards and the provision of certain services by only some boards. Boards are expected to plan services within their annual allocations.

Woodlands

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the genuinely native pinewoods in the Forestry Commission's ownership which have been subjected to clear felling or underplanting with either non-native pine or alien conifers in the last 30 years, giving areas of pinewood so treated in each case and the extent of underplanted native pine that has subsequently been cleared of alien conifers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Open areas within the native pinewoods

have been planted over the last 30 years with pines grown from both native and non-native seed, and with other conifer species. The areas within each pinewood which have been planted with pines from non-native seed or with other conifers, and the areas which have subsequently been cleared, are given in the following table.

Name of wood	*Area planted (hectares)*	*Area cleared (hectares)*
Inshriach	18·0	—
Glenmore	3·0	All
Glenmoriston	15·0	—
Glen Affric	172·0	17·0
Glen Cannich	123·0	3·0
Guisachan and Cougie	72·0	—
Achnashellach	10·0	—
Glen Garry	11·5	1·5
Arkaig and Mallie	58·0	—
Glen Loy	1·5	All
Callop	1·5	All
Rannoch	169·0	8·0
Glen Orchy	0·5	All

No record has been kept of the areas of native pine which have been felled in these woods.

ENERGY

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

2. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the date on which the electricity generating industry of England and Wales will achieve the 12,000 MW flue gas desulphurisation programme.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are determined to comply with the requirements of the EC large combustion plants directive. The retrofitting of Drax power station is already under way and further retrofits are in prospect.

59. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress made in the programme to fit British power station capacity with flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Baldry: Contracts have already been placed for the installation of FGD equipment at the 4 GW Drax power station and further retrofits are in prospect.

Oil Production

5. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I meet the representatives of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association (UKOOA) regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

58. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the serious accident rate on the United Kingdom continental shelf and the Norwegian sector, expressed as a rate per 1,000 employees in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Figures for the United Kingdom continental shelf are as follows:

Year	*Serious accidents per 1,000 employees*
1985	3·5
1986	4·5
1987	2·1
1988	2·9
1989	2·8

The statistics for 1985-88 appear in the reports on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom. The figure given for 1989 will be included in the next report. The figures relate to injuries to persons but do not include deaths.

Comparable information for the Norwegian sector of the North sea is not available.

56. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many new offshore fields were approved by his Department in 1989.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During 1989 my Department gave consent to plans for the development of six new oil fields and three new gas fields on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

48. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total loss of oil and gas production on the United Kingdom continental shelf as a result of unprogrammed shutdowns since 5 July 1988.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Some 30 million tonnes of oil production has been deferred as a result of major unprogrammed shutdowns between July 1988 and the end of January 1990. The amount of gas production associated with this is very small and the long-term loss of both oil and gas will be minimal.

29. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what increase or decrease he expects in the output of North sea oil in the current year.

30. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what increase or decrease he expects in the output of North sea oil in the current year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I expect an increased recovery of output of North sea oil this year.

24. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress was made during 1989 in reducing the number of fallow blocks in the United Kingdom continental shelf.

54. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress was made during 1989 in reducing the number of fallow blocks in the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of fallow blocks has been reduced during 1989 from 125 to just under 90, a fall of over a quarter, and prospects for a further significant reduction this year look good. I shall continue to press this initiative with determination.

25. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much employment in the offshore oil and gas industry has increased since 1986.

43. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the change in employment in the offshore oil and gas industry since 1986.

47. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the change in employment in the offshore oil and gas industry since 1986.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Employment in the offshore oil and gas industry has risen from 22,300 in 1986 to 30,700 in 1989, an increase of almost 40 per cent.

20. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many wells were drilled on the United Kingdom's continental shelf in the 1980s and in the 1970s.

27. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many wells were drilled on the United Kingdom's continental shelf *(a)* in the 1980s and *(b)* in the 1970s.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many wells were drilled on the United Kingdom's continental shelf in the 1980s and in the 1970s.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The total numbers of exploration, appraisal and development wells drilled on the United Kingdom continental shelf in the periods 1970-79 and 1980-89 were 1,200 and 2,703 respectively

Nuclear Electric

10. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of Nuclear Electric; and what matters he discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I have met the chairman of Nuclear Electric on a number of occasions to discuss aspects of the nuclear industry.

34. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the earliest date on which Nuclear Electric could operate without any form of Treasury guarantee.

Mr. Baldry: Work on Nuclear Electric's financial structure is continuing.

Energy Efficiency

12. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much spending on the promotion of energy efficiency has risen since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The budget of the Energy Efficiency Office in the current year is £15 million, six times the level of spending in 1979-80 of £2·4 million.

60. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the Association for the Conservation of Energy, and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no plans to meet the Association for the Conservation of Energy.

Coal Production

15. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of production of coal from deep mines in Scotland.

Mr. Baldry: British Coal tells me that, so far this year, deep-mined output in Scotland is nearly 1·6 million tonnes, broadly the same as the output achieved in the same period last year, but at a productivity rate 75 per cent. higher. This is a remarkable achievement, and I congratulate both mineworkers and management.

Renewable Energy

18. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications for renewable sources of energy have been received for inclusion under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

46. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications for renewable sources of energy have been received for inclusion under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Wakeham: The area boards have received about 300 applications.

36. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how the development of renewable sources of energy will be encouraged after the privatisation of the electricity industry.

42. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how the development of renewable sources of energy will be encouraged after the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: After privatisation the Department will continue to undertake a major research and development programme aimed at developing commercially viable and environmentally acceptable renewable technologies. Over the next few years expenditure on the programme is expected to increase significantly. Funding will rise by 13·5 per cent. to over £20 million in 1990-91.

Renewables will also benefit from the non-fossil fuel obligation. The area boards have already received around 300 applications for inclusion in the initial obligation. An additional 600 MW of capacity within the obligation reserved exclusively for renewables will be introduced in a series of tranches during the 1990s. If it should appear desirable in the light of experience, the additional tranches could be brought forward or the total increased.

Electricity Prices

22. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the percentage increase in electricity prices for both domestic and industrial consumers between March 1988 and May 1990; and by how much these increases exceeded the rate of inflation.

Mr. Baldry: Between the first quarter of 1988 and the fourth quarter of 1989, the latest period for which information is available, domestic electricity prices increased by 16 per cent. in current terms. That is an increase of 3 per cent. above the rate of inflation as measured by the GDP deflator of 12 per cent.

Between the first quarter of 1988 and the third quarter of 1989, the latest period for which information is available, industrial prices increased by 4 per cent. in current terms, 7 per cent. below the rate of inflation as measured by the GDP deflator of 10 per cent.

63. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the level of *(a)* domestic and *(b)* non-domestic electricity prices in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: Electricity prices are a matter for the industry and I have nothing to add to the statement made by my right hon. Friend on 12 February.

62. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the members of the British Iron and Steel Producers Association to discuss electricity prices for 1990-91.

Mr. Wakeham: BISPA is a member of the energy intensive users group which I and my Department meet regularly.

50. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has undertaken regarding the level of electricity prices for 1990-91.

Mr. Baldry: Electricity prices are a matter for the industry. However, I frequently meet the representatives of the electricity industry and a wide range of issues are discussed.

32. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in domestic electricity prices since 1984.

45. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in domestic electricity prices since 1984.

Mr. Baldry: Domestic electricity prices between the fourth quarters of 1984 and 1989 resulted in a reduction of 8 per cent. in real terms.

Opencast Mining

23. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about British Coal's proposals to develop opencast sites.

Mr. Baldry: I have received a number of representations about opencasting in general, and about particular proposals to develop individual sites.

British Coal

26. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

28. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chief inspector of the nuclear installations inspectorate; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: Although I meet the chief inspector of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate from time to time, I have no plans to do so in the immediate future. Officials of my Department are, of course, in regular contact with the nuclear installations inspectorate on matters relating to nuclear safety.

European Community Energy Ministers

31. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to attend a meeting of the European Economic Community Council of Energy Ministers.

Mr. Wakeham: The next meeting of the European Community Council of Energy Ministers is due to take place on 21 May 1990. Either I or my right hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Morrison) will attend.

British Gas

33. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Gas; and what issues he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Gas regularly and discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the level of investment by British Gas since it was privatised.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for British Gas plc.

Electricity Supply Industry

35. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make it his policy to exempt employees of the electricity supply industry from the provisions of the Financial Services Act 1986, when discussing financial projects for their industry with bona fide journalists and academics engaged in studying the industry.

Mr. Baldry: The Electricity Act 1989 has not amended the Financial Services Act 1986 to exempt employees of the electricity supply industry from its provisions when discussing financial projects for the industry with bona fide journalists and academics engaged in studying the industry, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy sees no reason why such employees should be so exempted in future.

Amoco Application

37. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to make a decision on Amoco's proposals for a central area transmission system.

41. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to make a decision on Amoco's proposals for a central area transmission system.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave on 19 February to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, *Official Report*, col. 528.

Director-General of Electricity Supply

38. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the Director-General of Electricity Supply; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the Director-General of Electricity Supply from time to time to discuss aspects of electricity supply industry regulation.

Electricity Privatisation

39. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the current progress of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Baldry: The Government intend to implement the new structure of the industry on 31 March and to complete its privatisation within this Parliament.

Neighbourhood Energy Action

40. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chief executive of Neighbourhood Energy Action; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the director of Neighbourhood Energy Action from time to time to discuss matters relating to the improvement of energy efficiency in low-income households.

North Sea Gas

44. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest assessment of the remaining reserves of North sea gas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Gas reserves at the end of 1988 were estimated to be 1,195 billion cubic metres at the proven plus probable level. The estimate for reserves remaining at the end of 1989 will be presented to Parliament in the 1990 Brown Book due to be published in the spring.

National Power

49. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chief executive of National Power; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chief executive of National Power regularly to discuss many aspects of his business.

Health and Safety Executive

51. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Health and Safety Executive; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I met representatives of the Health and Safety Commission and Health and Safety Executive in December last year. Officials of my Department meet Executive personnel on a regular basis.

Gas Standing Charges

52. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas to discuss the trend in standing charges since the privatisation of the gas industry.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas to discuss the trend in standing charges since the privatisation of the gas industry.

Mr. Wakeham: Standing charges are a matter for British Gas plc. However, I understand that standing charges have fallen in real terms by 19 per cent. since privatisation.

Electricity Council

53. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to meet the chairman of the Electricity Council; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of the Electricity Council regularly to discuss various matters.

Energy Efficiency

55. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the rate of improvement in energy efficiency since 1979 *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other European countries.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) earlier today.

Landfill Gas Schemes

57. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what encouragement his Department has given to the development of landfill gas schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) earlier today.

Combined Heat and Power

61. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what initiatives the Energy Efficiency Office is taking to promote the use of combined heat and power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department is actively promoting combined heat and power through the best practice programme. In particular my Energy Efficiency Office has planned a series of regional CHP marketing events to be held in 1990.

Acid Rain

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to reduce acid rain emissions from coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are determined to implement in full the EC large combustion plants directive. This directive commits the United Kingdom to reduce its emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from existing plants, such as fossil fuelled power stations, but does not specify the means by which this has to be done. Retrofitting flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment will play an important part. Contracts have already been placed for 4GW of FGD equipment at Drax power station, and further retrofits are in prospect. However, other measures, such as the burning of low-sulphur fuels, including gas, are likely to contribute.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the date on which the fossil fuel or nuclear levy will fall to 5 per cent. or less.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) earlier today.

Offshore Oil

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met trade union representatives involved in the offshore industry; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 December 1989 at column *99*.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any representations concerning trade union representation for offshore workers in the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department received a number of representations from hon. Members and others and consulted trade unions fully before the Offshore Installations (Safety Representatives and Safety Committees) Regulations 1989 were made. The regulations came into force on 18 September 1989.

I have also been in correspondence with MSF on trade union recognition offshore which is a matter for employers and the particular trade unions concerned. I will be meeting members of MSF and its parliamentary committee soon.

Department of Energy (Future Role)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he is undertaking of the continuing need for a Department of Energy.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 15 February at column *361*.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further plans he has to privatise the activities of his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: We plan to privatise the electricity supply industry in England and Wales and, in due course, British Coal. I have at present no further plans of this kind.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what savings his Department has made in its expenditure following the privatisation of industries which were his Department's responsibility.

Mr. Wakeham: As a direct result of privatisations already carried through, my Department has saved 20 staff out of a total of around 1,000. The associated savings in administrative costs currently amount to around £400,000 a year.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has made of the number of elderly people who would benefit significantly from energy conservation measures in their homes; and what average saving in annual energy costs per household might be achieved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The installation of cost-effective energy efficiency measures could improve comfort and reduce fuel bills in most households including those where the occupants are elderly. It is estimated that savings of 20 per cent. or more could typically be achieved through the adoption of straightforward measures.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much spending on the promotion of energy efficiency has risen since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The budget of the Energy Efficiency Office in the current year is £15 million—six times the level of spending in 1978-79 of £2·4 million.

Magnox

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chief executive of the Health and Safety Executive and Her Majesty's chief inspectorate of nuclear installations to discuss the future operational life expectancy of the Magnox nuclear power stations.

Mr. Baldry: On present plans I expect to meet the Director General of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and the chief inspector of HSE's nuclear installations inspectorate in May. Officials in my Department have regular contact with personnel from the Health and Safety Executive's NII.

Friends of the Earth

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet representatives of Friends of the Earth; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I met representatives of Friends of the Earth last October. I have no present plans for a further meeting.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on current Government policy in respect of *(a)* the transportation by land and air of nuclear waste or spent fuel of all grades in or over the United Kingdom and *(b)* the importation of other nations' nuclear wastes for reprocessing or storage in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: The transport of all radioactive materials is allowed only subject to very rigorous requirements. Regulations are laid down by the Department of Transport and these are based on internationally agreed standards of safety recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The containers approved for radioactive materials are designed in such a way that there would be no significant radiological hazard even in a severe accident. Therefore, safety does not depend on means of transport or route employed.

Nuclear wastes are not imported into the United Kingdom. Since 1976, BNFL's contracts for the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel have contained options for the return of wastes arising. The Government intend that reprocessing contracts with overseas customers should continue to contain such options, that the options should be exercised and that wastes should be returned.

THORP

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has regarding the negotiation of a contract between British Nuclear Fuels plc and the German company VEBA to reprocess German nuclear waste at the THORP reprocessing plant at Sellafield,

Cumbria; whether any United Kingdom or West German Government agency is acting as an intermediary between the two companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The contractual negotiations that have taken place directly between British Nuclear Fuels plc and several German utilities are a commercial matter for the companies involved. They relate to reprocessing at Sellafield of spent fuel from German reactors, not of waste. In line with Government policy, the contracts, when concluded, will provide for the return to the Federal Republic of Germany of wastes arising from the reprocessing.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current expected cost of the THORP nuclear waste reprocessing plant at Sellafield, Cumbria; and what is the anticipated date on which it will begin operations.

Mr. Baldry: The expected total cost of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield is some £1·8 billion. British Nuclear Fuels plc has secured business worth up to £5 billion which will pay for its investment in the plant. The fuel receipt and storage facility is operational now and commercial reprocessing is expected to begin in late 1992. The facility will reprocess spent fuel and not waste.

Energy Prices

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to allow energy prices to be determined by market forces.

Mr. Wakeham: Prices of petroleum products are already determined by market forces. It is the Government's policy that where systems of regulation exist they are designed to promote competition and over a period of years to produce prices which reflect the appropriate market forces. The Government seek to ensure that the price of energy reflects the true costs of production including a fair return on investment.

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his most up-to-date assessment of the cost of construction, commissioning, operating and reprocessing spent fuel rods arising at the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor nuclear power station, following his decision to cancel the three other proposed pressurised water reactor stations;

(2) what is his most up-to-date assessment of the effect of his decision to cancel the three other proposed pressurised water reactors on the cost of proceeding with Sizewell B.

Mr. Baldry: The costs of Sizewell B are a matter for Nuclear Electric. The company will be providing my Department with a latest estimate for the construction cost of Sizewell B when they have completed their current review.

Miners (Union Contributions)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of his discussions with the Union of Democratic Mineworkers on 23 January; whether he discussed the method of payment of union contributions of members of the National Union of Mineworkers in the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Mr. Wakeham: A number of matters were discussed when my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) met the president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers on 23 January. No reference was made during the meeting to the method of payment of union contributions.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his assessment of the impact of the future operational life expectancy of the Dungeness B, Hartlepool and Heysham I advanced gas-cooled reactor nuclear power stations on the level of the nuclear or fossil-fuel levy over the next 10 years.

Mr. Baldry: As my right hon. Friend announced on 12 February, the non-fossil fuel obligation will be set initially for the period up to 1997-98. No AGR station is planned to close before the end of this period. The life expectancy of AGR stations will not therefore affect the level of the levy up to 1997-98.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information is available to him as to the comparative costs of nuclear power at *(a)* Dungeness and *(b)* Torness.

Mr. Baldry: This is a commercial matter for the Nuclear Electric division of CEGB and for the SSEB. I have therefore asked the chairmen to write to the hon. Member.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 27 February 1990

WALES

Welsh Language Teaching

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual expenditure on schemes to teach Welsh as a second language to adults in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Welsh Office support for the teaching of Welsh to adults amounts to over £305,000 in 1989-90. This complements the support given by LEAs, which are the main providers in this field.

Sheep

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of ewe and lamb slaughterings in Wales for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Estimates of slaughterings of sheep are available only for the two categories shown in the table:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Ewes and rams	80·7	131·7	194·2	198·5	[1]224·3
Sheep and lambs (excluding ewes and rams)	1,478·6	1,646·6	1,739·5	1,793·0	[1]2,161·1

[1] Provisional.

Teaching

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will convene a meeting of teacher unions in Wales to discuss with them resignations from the teaching profession in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We are always prepared to consider requests from the teachers' unions for meetings to discuss issues of concern to them. We have had no such request.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on stress in the teaching profession in Wales;

(2) what is his assessment of the impact upon teachers of the demands of the Education Reform Act in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There is widespread support in the teaching profession for the changes introduced by the Education Reform Act and notably for the introduction of a national curriculum and local management of schools. We are well aware that this support is tempered by concerns about the demands placed on teachers by the pace of these changes. We have instigated a number of measures to help teachers and provide them with support.

We are providing grant support to LEAs in Wales in 1990-91 of £3·9 million specifically for in-service training to support the teaching and assessment of the national curriculum; and a further £4·5 million, under the education support grant scheme, on projects directly related to the introduction of national curriculum core subjects. We are also providing about £0·5 million of funding for the Curriculum Council for Wales to develop through its teacher support groups practical help and advice for teachers in implementing the national curriculum.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science and my right hon. Friend are currently considering advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council about the administration of assessment of the national curriculum at key stage 1 (five to seven-year-old pupils). In considering our response we are particularly concerned that the systems should be practicable for teachers and not excessively demanding. The assessment arrangements will be developed in the light of practical pilot studies in schools in Wales.

Our officials have been working with local education authorities to develop a co-operative approach to information requirements; we intend to ensure that the demands on schools are kept to the minimum necessary and that all agencies ensure that requests for information are not duplicated.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the percentage collection of the poll tax in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I expect the vast majority of the people of Wales to abide by the law. I therefore expect a very high percentage collection of the community charge.

A483 (Fencing)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps have been taken to ensure that the standard fencing erected on behalf of his Department on the A483 Ruabon bypass is adequate for the purpose of preventing livestock from straying on the highway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: All fencing along the Ruabon bypass complies with appropriate departmental standards and specifications.

Consultative Health Council

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements will be made to cover the gap between the date at which membership of the existing consultative health council comes to an end and 1 January 1991 when the proposed new structure will come into existence.

Mr. Grist: I assume the right hon. Gentleman is referring to community health councils. It is intended that new councils will be set up in shadow form from 1 January 1991 but will not take over from existing councils until 1 April 1991.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the results of his recent visit to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Peter Walker: I was pleased to be able to visit Saudi Arabia between 5 and 8 February as the guest of Shaikh Hisham Nazer, the Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources. I was accompanied on the visit by a team of Welsh business men and representatives of the university of Wales. In the course of my visit I held productive discussions with leading Saudi Ministers, business men and academics, and I was delighted by the enthusiasm with which we were received.

The business mission was a resounding success and £7 million of orders for Welsh companies have already been secured, with a further £2·5 million anticipated in the immediate future, and the prospect of more to come thereafter. Three joint venture partnerships with Saudi companies have also been identified; and some 50 inquiries for the supply of products, offers of distributorship and supply partnerships have been made by Saudi businesses, which are being channelled to appropriate Welsh and United Kingdom companies.

Following my meeting with the Saudi Minister for Education and visits by the university of Wales representatives to Saudi universities and higher education establishments, new and valuable academic links between Wales and Saudi Arabia have been forged. We anticipate formal co-operation agreements between the university of Wales and the King Saud university and the King Fahd university of petroleum and minerals. This will lead to significantly more Saudi students studying in Wales and an expansion of staff and student interchanges.

I suggested reciprocal visits to Wales by the principals of the five Saudi colleges of agriculture and by a mission of Saudi business men and I am glad to say that both these invitations were enthusiastically accepted.

This has been one of the most successful missions from Wales and is further evidence of the growing strength of the Welsh economy. When we welcome the teams of Saudi business men and academics in the near future they will be able to see for themselves the quality of products and research produced in Wales and I am sure that this will lead to further opportunities for mutual investment and exchanges between Wales and Saudi Arabia.

THE ARTS

Icklingham Treasure

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his policy in relation to the Icklingham treasure.

Mr. Luce: I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment on this particular matter while it is still under police investigation. I have kept in close touch with developments and had a number of meetings with those involved. In the meantime, my noble Friend Lord Hesketh has announced in another place the plans of the Secretary of State for the Environment to amend the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, with a view to strengthening legislative controls on scheduled sites.

Cash Limits

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give details of any proposed changes to the cash limits of his Department's votes in 1989-90.

Mr. Luce *[pursuant to his reply, 29 January 1990, c. 3]:* Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII, vote 2 will be increased by £7,178,000 from £181,266,000 to £188,444,000. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure. The additional provision is required to enable the Government to accept a number of important works of art in lieu of tax.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Audit Fees

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of rising audit fees on inflation.

Mr. Ryder: None. It is not possible to identify the effect of audit fees in any of the usual measures of inflation.

VAT

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any proceedings have been commenced against Beaulieu Textile Company (Belgium) and its company directors for value added tax evasion following the Harrogate carpet fair in July 1989.

Mr. Ryder: No proceedings have been commenced against a company by the name of Beaulieu Textile Company (Belgium). At the Harrogate carpet fair in September 1989 the following directors of the Beaulieu Group of Companies were arrested and have so far been charged with cheating the public Revenue and offences under section 39(3) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983:

Jan de Clerck
Dominiek de Clerck
Luc de Clerck
Francis de Clerck

Tax Districts (Work Backlogs)

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures are used by Her Majesty's Government to assess the backlog of work or the degree of delay in the handling of personal tax affairs in the various tax districts; what, by the measures used, is the trend in the level of backlog over a recent convenient period; and whether he will publish separate figures for the various tax districts.

Mr. Lilley: The principal measure used to assess the backlog of work in tax districts is the regular count of papers on hand that have been awaiting attention for more than 14 days and two months.

The unworked papers over 14 days old at April during the period 1985 to 1989 were:

	Number
April 1985	1,983,000
April 1986	1,354,000
April 1987	172,000
April 1988	70,000
April 1989	82,000

The position in April 1990 is expected to be broadly similar to that in April 1989.

There are no plans to publish separate figures for the individual tax districts.

Interest Rates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the average interest rate for each year since 1981.

Mr. Ryder: Average base rates for each year are contained in table 13.15 of "Financial Statistics".

European Investment Bank

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial contribution the United Kingdom makes to the European Investment Bank; and what control is exercised over its lending and granting policy.

Mr. Ryder: The United Kingdom's present subscription to the European Investment Bank is a total of 5·51 becu, paid in annual instalments in the period October 1988 to October 1991. Control over the bank's lending and granting policy is exercised by the bank's governors and board of directors. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a governor of the bank, and the United Kingdom has five representatives on the board of directors.

Mortgages

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1978 the weight of mortgage interest in the retail prices index, together with the implied total payable by householders to mortgagees.

Mr. Lilley: The weights for mortgage interest payments in the general index of retail prices, expressed as parts per thousand, have been as follows. The fall between 1986 and 1987 is partly a reflection of a change in methodology recommended by the RPI advisory committee.

	Weight
1978	23
1979	31
1980	38
1981	42
1982	41
1983	30
1984	39
1985	46
1986	54
1987	44
1988	42
1989	60

Each year's weight reflects the estimated liability of the average household covered by the index, given a standardised mortgage arrangement, the expenditure being valued at the interest rate ruling in mid-January. The figure cannot be used to calculate the actual amount payable by all households over a period.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for Southend-on-Sea district council the number of residential hereditaments rated at less than £100 a year, by steps of £100 to £500, from £500 to £1,000 and over £1,000, together with the poundage in the current financial year.

Mr. Lilley: The poundage is £2·535. But the information about rateable values could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the number of residential properties in Grimsby with a rateable value not exceeding £200 per annum, and the number in excess of that amount.

Mr. Lilley: This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Carriers (Documentation)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who is responsible for checking at the point of entry that a carrier has the correct documentation.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 26 February 1990]*: Customs and Excise is responsible for checking all documents relating to the customs clearance of imported goods. It is not responsible for checking other documents.

PRIME MINISTER

Clockwork Orange Project

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to consult *(a)* General Sir Frank King, General Officer Commanding and *(b)* Sir Peter Leng, Commander of Army Land Forces, Northern Ireland, 1973-75 to establish their view of events surrounding the Clockwork Orange project.

The Prime Minister: No. Both General Sir Frank King and General Sir Peter Leng have made it clear that they do not recall any project specifically named Clockwork Orange, nor any project aimed at denigrating Members of Parliament.

South Africa

Q16. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the current political situation in South Africa.

The Prime Minister: President de Klerk has taken fundamental decisions which have gone further in the direction of ending apartheid than those taken by any previous Government. The way is open to peaceful negotiations with the ANC and with those who represent other groupings in South Africa to work out a new democratic constitution, which, as President de Klerk has said, must have the support of the majority of South Africans.

Q59. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has held recent discussions with *(a)* Chancellor Kohl and *(b)* other European Community state leaders concerning current relations between the nations of the European Community and the Republic of South Africa and the possibility of Community aid for political parties in South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I last discussed South Africa with my European Community colleagues at the Strasbourg European Council on 8-9 December 1989.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the question of aid to political parties in South Africa with his Community colleagues in Dublin on 20 February. They welcomed this suggestion and agreed to consider how such a programme might be organised.

Q76. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to do so.

Homelessness

Q57. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make official visits to London's cardboard city and to people living in similar circumstances in Manchester and other major cities.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 13 February 1990 (*Official Report*, column *136*).

Transport

Q91. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on investment in transport infrastructure.

The Prime Minister: I have received representations on a wide range of issues concerning investment in transport infrastructure.

Textiles

Q140. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to a textile factory.

The Prime Minister: I visit textile factories from time to time and very much like the woollen products of Yorkshire mills.

Council of Europe

Q155. **Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Prime Minister if she plans any meeting with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans for such a meeting. But I pay tribute to the most important role the Council of Europe is playing in the development of democracy in Europe.

Engagements

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. French: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Perrier

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quality tests have taken place since 1 December 1989 on Perrier water for consumer protection; and on what dates they took place.

Mr. Maclean: Following the discovery of traces of benzene in Perrier water in the United States of America tests on United Kingdom supplies were undertaken on behalf of the Food Safety Directorate between 12 and 15 February. The results were made available in the form of news release 67/90 on 15 February. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Enforcement of the Natural Mineral Waters Regulations 1985 is the responsibility of local authorities. In addition the responsible authority in the water's country of origin is required to carry out periodic checks to ensure continued compliance with the terms of the original regulations of the water under the directive by that authority. Information on any quality tests undertaken by that authority is not required to be circulated.

Meat Exports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations exist in other European Community member states on the importation of British meat and bone meal.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is as follows:

France
Currently ban imports of British meat and bone meal;
Italy
Require confirmation that the meat and bone meal does not originate from bovines, ovines or caprines;
Netherlands
Prohibit the feeding to ruminants of meat and bone meal derived from ruminants; and
West Germany
Application must be made to the appropriate land authority for an import permit. This will state the particular certification which is required in each case. The Ministry is unaware that any such application has been made or of the certification required.

Covent Garden

Miss Hoey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place a copy of the feasibility study commissioned from Binder Hamlyn in February 1989 on the new Covent Garden market in the Library.

Mr. Curry: I expect to be able to place a summary of the report in the Library of the House within the next few days.

Fisheries Research

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any fisheries research vessels are leased or hired to other bodies or nations.

Mr. Curry: None of the Ministry's fisheries research vessels has been leased or hired to other bodies or nations.

ENERGY

North Sea (Oil and Gas)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated output of oil and gas from the North sea in the next decade; and what is the estimated consumption of oil and gas in the next decade.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Many factors will influence output and demand for oil and gas over such a long period. Of particular importance will be the extent to which new fields are found and brought into production. With exploration and drilling activity likely to reach an all time record for the United Kingdom this year, I am confident that the United Kingdom will become fully self-sufficient in gas and remain a net oil exporter well into the 1990s.

Energy Conservation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been his Department's budget for energy conservation for each year since 1979, in constant prices.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Expenditure by my Department on energy efficiency programmes since 1979 has been as follows (1989 prices in brackets):

£ million

	Expenditure	*1989 prices*
1979-80	2·4	(5·0)
1980-81	4·5	(7·8)
1981-82	6·9	(10·7)
1982-83	9·4	(13·6)
1983-84	11·4	(15·5)
1984-85	17·5	(22·8)
1985-86	22·5	(27·9)
1986-87	24·5	(29·2)
1987-88	18·6	(21·2)
1988-89	18·5	(19·8)
1989-90[1]	15·0	(15·0)

[1] Estimated.

Wind Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report number EERU 060, a survey of the wind energy resource of Cornwall, to examine the influence of settlement patterns and topography on optimum wind turbine size and disposition, by Dr. Geoffrey Williams, published in July 1989 by the energy and environment research unit of the Open university, Milton Keynes.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes.

Alternative Energy (Video)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the video and transcript of the Public Eye programme "The nuclear obsession—time for an energy alternative" broadcast on 16 February.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

Power Station Emissions

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what reports he has received concerning the relative merits of different desulphurisation methods for power station emissions; and what consideration he has given to the comparative requirements of limestone and subsequent output and disposal of gypsum.

Mr. Baldry: I am aware of a number of reports about particular methods of power station flue gas desulphurisation. It is for the electricity supply industry to consider the appropriate choice of technology for desulphurisation; and that will be subject to normal planning and environmental requirements.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of the instances in which long periods were being worked on offshore installations and of other reasons leading to the safety notice of 10 January; if he will give details of what steps are being taken to enforce this safety notice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details of long hours being worked offshore were received from offshore workers, who have asked to remain anonymous. As the hon. Member is aware, my safety directorate has undertaken to guarantee anonymity whenever requested. Approaches have also been made to my safety directorate by safety representatives and by a union.

Safety notices are non-statutory documents. However, careful consideration will be given to taking action under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in any instance where it is found that the health or safety of any offshore worker is affected by unreasonably long hours being worked.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nepal

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the sentencing in Kathmandu of six persons for a term of six months' imprisonment because of conversion to Christianity.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are making inquiries in Kathmandu about reports of these sentences. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office discussed the treatment of Christians in Nepal with both the Nepalese Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister during his visit to Kathmandu last week.

Romania

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial aid the Government have provided to Romania since the overthrow of President Ceaucescu; and what financial aid the Government will supply to Romania over the next two months.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the aid provided to Romania by the International Red Cross since the overthrow of President Ceaucescu.

Mr. Sainsbury: After the overthrow of the Ceaucescu regime the International Red Cross provided approximately 9,000 tonnes of relief goods, (food, clothing and medical supplies) with an estimated value of over £10 million. This assistance was provided by 29 different national Red Cross societies. The United Kingdom contribution being approximately £300,000. The IRC is now developing programmes of assistance to targeted groups including rural dispensaries, orphanages, homes for the elderly and homes for the handicapped.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what medical supplies, food, clothing and other non-financial aid the United Kingdom Government have provided to Romania since the overthrow of President Ceaucescu; and what medical supplies, food, clothing and other non-financial aid the Government will supply to Romania over the next two months.

Mr. Sainsbury: We donated a consignment of 1·8 tonnes of medical supplies on 24 December and several items of medical equipment since then, including 1 million disposable syringes worth £40,000. Five victims of the December fighting are in the United Kingdom for major surgery, at a cost yet to be determined. A further £53,000 has been made available to finance a project by Marie Stopes International to improve birth control services in Romania. We are contributing about £5·8 million to the food aid and medical supplies packages sent, or so far agreed, by the EC. Further funds, as yet to be determined, will be made available over the next two months for medical supplies.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government have taken to co-ordinate the efforts of voluntary agencies, individuals and others involved in providing aid to Romania since the overthrow of President Ceaucescu.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have received many offers of help for Romania from individuals and organisations and have taken them into account in providing official relief assistance. We are also in close touch with the British Red Cross, which is co-ordinating many private offers of help.

Burma

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Burmese Government about their commitment to free and fair elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Burmese military Government have disregarded basic human and political rights since they seized power in September 1988. We have made clear our opposition to their oppressive policies.

Most recently, on 14 February, the latest in a long series of demarches by the Twelve to the Burmese authorities called for the elections planned for May to be open to all candidates. In spite of these and other international protests, hundreds of opposition politicians have been arrested since July 1989. They have included Aung San Suu Kyi, the most popular opposition leader, who, on 17 February, was finally debarred from standing in the elections.

It now seems unlikely that the elections can be regarded by the international community as anything other than a sham. We will nevertheless continue to do what we can to encourage the regime, both directly and through the continuing western aid boycott, to hold genuinely democratic elections.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Court Lighting

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he has given to the health and safety implications of flicker light in the courts.

The Attorney-General: Lighting in courts is designed to conform to the standards and codes of practice current at the time of installation.

Professional advice to the Lord Chancellor's Department indicates that there is no firm evidence that fluorescent lighting constitutes a health and safety risk. If there were evidence that any particular mode of lighting constituted a risk to health or safety, the standards would be amended to eliminate such risk.

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Amos: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions there have been of people publicly calling for the death of Salman Rushdie; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No prosecutions have been instituted for incitement to murder or threats to kill, due to a lack of sufficient evidence to justify the institution of criminal proceedings. However, where demonstrations which have included people publicly calling for the death of Salman Rushdie have led to instances of public disorder, prosecutions have followed. The director regards as a matter of extreme gravity any conduct on the part of any person within this jurisdiction which does amount to the offence of incitement to murder. It will remain his policy, with my full agreement, to deal accordingly with evidence establishing such conduct that may be placed before him.

SCOTLAND

Woodlands

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer on 15 January, *Official Report*, column 68, what consideration he has given to the report by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on "Native Pinewoods in Scotland: A Review 1957-1987", and its assessment of the changes in the area of native pinewoods.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission has studied this report, including its assessment of the changes in the area of native pinewoods.

The report proved useful in the preparation of the "Guidelines for the Management of Native Pinewoods" published by the commission last December.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what area of the Black Wood of Rannoch has been cleared of previously underplanted alien conifers in the last 12 months; what area has been identified for such treatment in the Forestry Commission's conservation plan for this site; and what area will be restored in this manner in the next 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Spruce and other non-native species have been planted on 169 hectares of formerly open ground in the Black Wood of Rannoch, mostly adjacent to the main wood. Under the Forestry Commission's conservation plan for the wood all these areas will be cleared over a period of years; 8 hectares have been cleared so far—3 in the past 12 months—and 20 hectares are scheduled for clearance in the next 12 months.

Water Supplies

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the total Government expenditure has been on water supplies in Scotland in the last, and current, financial years; and what these sums represent per head of population.

Mr. Rifkind: Expenditure on water supplies in Scotland is met by regional and islands councils, as the water authorities, and paid for by consumers. Grant payments from central Government, made under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944-70 and the Industrial Development Act 1982, for water supplies in 1988-89 amounted to £4·420 million (£0·87 per head); in 1989-90 grant payments to January 1990 were £4·155 million (£0·82 per head).

Sports Council

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much funding has been given by his Department for the Scottish Sports Council in each of the past 12 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Grant aid to the Scottish Sports Council since 1979-80 has been as follows:

Year	*Grant-in-Aid* £
1979-80	2,829,000
1980-81	3,240,000
1981-82	3,510,000
1982-83	4,088,907
1983-84	3,887,000
1984-85	4,149,000
1985-86	4,340,000
1986-87	4,585,000
1987-88	4,698,000
1988-89	[1]5,799,000
1989-90	5,150,000
1990-91	5,517,000

[1] Includes the figure of £1 million towards the cost of the Scottish Sports Council's new headquarters building at South Gyle, Edinburgh.

Electricity

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if a date has been set for the flotation of the Scottish electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We have considered carefully the options for floating the Scottish electricity companies in 1990 and 1991. We have concluded that the best time to float Scottish Power plc and Scottish Hydro-Electric plc will, subject to market conditions, be in May or June of 1991. The Scottish successor companies will begin operating on 31 March 1990, when they inherit the assets and liabilities of the two Scottish electricity boards. The Scottish nuclear company will remain in the public sector.

The Government's decision on flotation timing will enable the Scottish companies to present to investors a satisfactory track record of successful performance following the withdrawal of the nuclear element from the privatisation programme. It will also give them an opportunity to firm up arrangements before privatisation to export Scottish electricity to England and Wales. However, the decision will not prevent two of Scotland's largest plcs from competing for new business and operating on a fully commercial basis while they remain in Government hands.

I believe that this is the right decision for Scotland. The privatisation of Scottish electricity will be of tremendous significance to the Scottish economy, and we are anxious that there should be sufficient time to get it right. We considered the possibility of a much earlier flotation date but decided that this would not be wise. The new plcs will, following this decision, have a full opportunity to consolidate the new industry structure and to make their mark with the public, the financial community and with electricity customers both north and south of the border in advance of their flotation.

Waste Disposal

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish as a matter of urgency a ministerial working party which represents all interested parties and receives evidence on the widest possible basis, charged with recommending a national waste disposal policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Part II of the Environmental Protection Bill, which is currently before the House of Commons, contains provisions which will strengthen and enhance the existing legislation. It would be premature to consider setting up any such working party.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list any statutory duties his Department has to inspect landfill waste sites.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Inspection of landfill waste sites is for the district and islands councils in Scotland, in their capacity as waste regulatory authorities. Although the hazardous waste inspectorate does not have a statutory duty to inspect landfill waste sites, it may visit landfill waste sites in discharging its remit to examine the management of hazardous waste and to advise local authorities on their duties under part I of the Control of Pollution Act.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake a new national survey of waste tips in

Scotland; if he will take steps to establish a register of old waste dumps; and what action he is taking to inform river purification boards of the location of waste dumps which pose a risk of contamination to drinking water supplies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In February 1988 district and islands councils in Scotland were asked to identify all waste disposal sites which had received biodegradable waste. The hazardous waste inspectorate urged authorities to monitor these sites to establish what degree of risk exists, if any, and to take appropriate remedial action. A follow-up survey is planned later this year to assess what progress has been made in Scotland.

The recent report of the House of Commons Environment Committee has recommended that a register of contaminated land be set up for England and Wales, a matter which we will consider when assessing the implications of the report for Scotland.

Little of Scotland's drinking water supply is taken from groundwater. River purification boards have been statutory consultees for all waste disposal developments since 1978.

Building Sites

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the involvement of the hazardous waste inspectorate in the events at Morriston Park building site in Cambuslang.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hazardous waste inspectorate's involvement at Morriston Park has been to provide independent advice to ensure that the developers and the district council were aware of the steps which should be taken to establish reliable information about the presence or otherwise of landfill gas at the site.

This advice was based on the Government's technical memorandum on the monitoring and control of landfill gas, namely waste management paper No. 27.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the powers district councils have to compel house builders to make safe sites they propose to build on.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Part G of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1981-87 contains provisions governing the preparation of sites under which matter harmful to health must be removed from the site of any building intended for human use and habitation and from the ground in the vicinity of the building. The regulations are enforced by the relevant local authority, usually the district council. Under section 6 of the Building (Scotland) Act 1959 a warrant must be obtained from the local authority before work starts; under section 9(5) of the Act it is an offence for any person to occupy or use a building, constructed by virtue of such a warrant, before a certificate of completion is issued.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what planning regulations there are setting out procedures to be carried out in investigating whether methane gas is present on a building site before building commences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no planning regulations setting out procedures for an investigation for the presence of methane gas on a building site before building commences. The Scottish Development Department issued a planning advice note (No. 33) in 1988 on the development of contaminated land which advised developers and local authorities on the need to identify and investigate land previously used for industrial and waste disposal purposes in order to assess the risks in developing such land.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he has to compel house builders to make safe sites they propose to build on.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The construction of new houses must be carried out in accordance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1981-87, which include provisions governing the preparation of sites. Enforcement of the regulations is the responsibility of the relevant local authority under powers contained in the Building (Scotland) Act 1959.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he has to compel house builders to remedy any safety risk discovered after building is completed on a site, and houses have been sold.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Under section 13 of the Building (Scotland) Act 1959, however, local authorities have powers to take action in respect of buildings found to be dangerous.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the construction of ships at the Scott Lithgow yard on the lower Clyde would infringe any agreement made with the European Commission.

Mr. Lang: No.

Council of Environment Ministers

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates of meetings of the Council of Environment Ministers attended by him or members of his ministerial team in the past 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave him on 24 January 1990, *Official Report*, column *728*. In the period concerned, meetings of the Environment Council have been attended by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment or another Minister from the Department of the Environment who has represented the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole.

Radiation and Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the latest number of recorded leukaemia cases in *(a)* Dunoon and the Cowal area and in *(b)* the rest of Argyle and Bute and *(c)* the rest of Scotland;

(2) whether he has any plans to refer cases of cancer among the population around Holy Loch to the committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment;

(3) whether his Department has commissioned any studies or intends to commission any studies into whether there is any link between the United States Navy's operations in Holy Loch and leukaemia clusters among children in the area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Up-to-date information on the number of leukaemia cases in the detail sought is not readily available. A study, which compared leukaemia incidence in the vicinity of Holy Loch over three time periods between 1968 and 1984 with the Scottish average, showed a raised incidence in only one of the periods studied.

The committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment, following its study at Dounreay, is currently assessing the evidence relating to leukaemia incidence around all the other Scottish nuclear sites and Scotland as a whole. It is not considered necessary, therefore, to commission any separate studies at this time.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the Scottish commentary on public expenditure.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department is issuing today "Public Expenditure to 1992-93: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme". I have, as in previous years, arranged for a copy to be sent to each Scottish Member. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Postgraduate Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students have received assistance under the postgraduate students allowance scheme in every year since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* This information is not readily available prior to session 1986-87 and figures from that date are as follows:

Session	*Number*
1986-87	2,940
1987-88	3,050
1988-89	2,673
[1]1989-90	2,931

[1] To date.

New Towns (Employment)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been lost and how many gained in each of the past five years in the Scottish new towns.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The tables show the total employment and net employment change in each of the Scottish new towns for each of the past five years. The information is taken from annual employment surveys undertaken by each new town. Although new town annual reports give some information on job gains and losses, this is not available on a consistent or comprehensive basis.

Table 1—Total Employment in the New Towns 15 March Each Year

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Cumbernauld	14,180	14,727	14,897	14,244	15,129	16,314
East Kilbride	26,236	27,049	27,279	28,308	30,157	30,569
Irvine	16,100	17,505	17,986	19,054	19,908	21,530
Livingston	12,825	14,137	15,821	16,473	17,952	18,988
Glenrothes	15,907	16,303	16,303	17,522	17,803	18,506

Source: Annual employment surveys by the new towns.

Table 2—Net Change in Employment

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Cumbernauld	547	170	−653	885	1,185
East Kilbride	813	230	1,029	1,849	412
Irvine	1,405	481	1,068	854	1,622
Livingston	1,312	1,684	652	1,479	1,036
Glenrothes	396	0	1,219	281	703

Source: Annual employment surveys by the new towns.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the estimated local income tax rates required to replace the gross income, including rebates, raised from the community charge in each region and district authority on the basis of current expenditure in 1989-90 and planned expenditure in 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* Approximate rates of local income tax required to replace the budgeted income from the community charge in 1989-90 are given in the table. Information on the 1990-91 budgets is not yet available.

Local income tax rate

	pence in £
Borders	8·5
Berwickshire	8·2
Ettrick and Lauderdale	8·5
Roxburgh	8·5
Tweeddale	8·6
Central	9·7
Clackmannan	10·4
Falkirk	8·9
Stirling	10·7
Dumfries and Galloway	8·5
Annandale and Eskdale	8·8
Nithsdale	8·5
Stewartry	8·4
Wigtown	8·5
Fife	10·4
Dunfermline	10·1

	pence in £
Kirkcaldy	10·3
North East Fife	11·1
Grampian	9·7
Aberdeen	10·5
Banff and Buchan	9·5
Gordon	9·1
Kincardine and Deeside	8·7
Moray	9·0
Highland	7·9
Badenoch and Strathspey	8·1
Caithness	7·8
Inverness	7·8
Lochaber	8·2
Nairn	7·9
Ross and Cromarty	8·3
Skye and Lochalsh	7·8
Sutherland	7·1
Lothian	13·2
East Lothian	12·9
Edinburgh	13·5
Midlothian	12·6
West Lothian	12·4
Strathclyde	10·3
Argyll and Bute	9·6
Bearsden and Milngavie	10·3
Clydebank	10·3
Clydesdale	10·4
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	9·5
Cumnock and Doon Valley	9·5
Cunninghame	9·6
Dumbarton	10·3
East Kilbride	11·0
Eastwood	9·7
Glasgow	10·6
Hamilton	10·1
Inverclyde	10·1
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	9·3
Kyle and Carrick	10·6
Monklands	10·1
Motherwell	10·5
Renfrew	10·2
Strathkelvin	10·3
Tayside	10·7
Angus	10·1
Dundee	11·2
Perth and Kinross	10·3
Orkney	5·1
Shetland	3·9
Western Isles	5·2
SCOTLAND	10·4

Notes:

1. The local income tax rate for Scotland has been estimated for 1989-90 by dividing the total amount to be raised from the community charge (including the water charge) by an estimate of the yield of 1p on the basic rate of income tax for Scotland.

2. The income tax rates by authority assume resource equalisation ie that the yield of 1p in the £ is the same per adult in all areas.

HEALTH

HIV

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available to him about the survivability of HIV in *(a)* dechlorinated tapwater, *(b)* settled raw sewage and *(c)* seawater.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Studies on the survival of HIV in dechlorinated tap water, settled raw sewage and sea water have been carried out at the water research centre and published in "Water Science Technology", volume 21, pages 55 to 59, 1989, copies of which are available in the Library. The concentration of HIV added to samples of water declined rapidly in the first four days, a tenfold decline occurring after an average 1·8 days in dechlorinated tap water, 2·9 days in settled raw sewage and 1·6 days in sea water. The authors conclude that it is extremely unlikely that HIV poses any threat to disinfected water supplies.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals he has to cut waiting lists for operations within the National Health Service in the Greater Manchester area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the North Western regional health authority has provisionally identified up to £1·25 million from its £1·9 million waiting list fund allocation in 1990-91 for the 12 health districts covering the Greater Manchester area. Details are still being discussed with districts, but this funding should enable 8,000 patients to be treated from the waiting lists. This is in addition to the £4·9 million allocated to these districts from the fund in the three years to 31 March 1990.

A management team, led by Mr. John Yates of Inter-Authority Comparisons and Consultancy, is examining waiting lists in South Manchester (general surgery and plastic surgery) and Oldham (general surgery). If the team recommends additional funding, allocations will be made in 1990-91 from the £12 million reserved for problem waiting lists.

In addition, we have approved and funded new consultant posts in Central Manchester (ophthalmology) and Bolton (trauma and orthopaedics) from the 100 new consultant posts targeted at districts with long waiting lists.

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the current Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale waiting lists as between differing specialties; and what are the comparable figures for five years ago.

Mr Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

In-patient waiting list, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale District Health Authority, as at 31 March, 1984 and 1989

Specialty	*1984*	*1989*
General Surgery	724	217
Urology	296	295
Trauma and Orthopaedics	287	179
Ear, Nose and Throat	406	246
Ophthalmology	57	248
Oral Surgery	62	93
Accident and Emergency	2	—
Anaesthetics	24	33
Gynaecology	677	426
General Medicine	5	—
Dermatology	41	9
Rheumatology	3	34
Paediatrics	3	5
Geriatric medicine	1	—
Mental Handicap	38	9
Mental Illness	26	13
TOTAL	2,652	1,807

Source: 1984 SBH203 return.
1989 KHO7 and KHO7a returns.
[1]Less self deferred admissions.

An additional consultant ophthalmologist has been employed in the Burnley area and the waiting list figure is now reducing.

Luton and Dunstable Hospital

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the North West Thames regional health authority proposes to begin the construction of the planned clinical block and the education centre at the Luton and Dunstable hospital;

(2) whether the North West Thames regional health authority has made any decision to defer the projected construction of a clinical block and an education centre at the Luton and Dunstable hospital.

Mr. Freeman: North West Thames regional health authority recently reviewed its capital programme due to the decline in residential land sales and the rise in building costs. I understand that both schemes are scheduled to start on site on 1 April 1992.

St. Helens and Knowsley Health District

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many directly managed National Health Service beds have been closed within St. Helens and Knowsley within the last three years; what proportion of these beds have been replaced; by whom they are managed; and whether they are still located within the boundary of the health district.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. The overall number of hospital beds available within the St. Helens and Knowsley health authority for the last three years is as follows:

Average daily available beds

Year	*Number*
1986	2,305
1987-88	2,073
1988-89	1,809

Source:
1986 SH3 return
1987-88 onward KH03 return

During this period the number of in-patient cases treated in the district rose from 32,965 to 35,346 and the number of day cases from 2,039 to 2,110. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of St. Helens and Knowsley health authority for more detailed information.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a breakdown of the number of prescriptions issued for each individual benzodiazepine by community pharmacists during *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Number of Prescriptions 1986-88 (millions)

Benzodiazepines	*Great Britain* 1986	1987	1988
Temazepam	7·2	7·8	7·7
Nitrazepam	5·5	5·2	4·6
Diazepam	5·2	5·1	4·5
Triazolam	2·0	2·2	2·2
Lorazepam	3·1	2·9	2·1
Chlordiazepoxide	1·1	1·0	0·9
Oxazepam	0·8	0·8	0·6
Lormetazepam	0·2	0·2	0·2
Loprazolam	0·1	0·1	0·2
Clonazepam	0·1	0·1	0·1
Clobazam	0·0	0·0	0·1
Totals	25·3	25·5	23·2

These estimates are based on a sample of prescriptions of approximately one in 200 in England and Wales and one in 100 in Scotland which were dispensed by chemists and appliance contractors.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to family practitioner committees and health authorities to ensure that doctors do not prescribe benzodiazepines for longer periods than those recommended by the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The prescribing of these drugs and the management of patients taking them are professional matters. Doctors already have advice about the use of benzodiazepines from the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Royal Colleges of Physicians, Psychiatrists and General Practitioners, the British Medical Association and the British National Formulary. We support that advice.

Voluntary Organisations

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the awards given to voluntary organisations under section 64 procedure for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: For 1988-89 I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 30 June 1989 at columns *571-74*. The full list of awards in 1989-90 will be published after the financial year has ended.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure he has for the number of units of blood held by the National Blood Transfusion Service; and what was the figure for *(a)* one year ago, *(b)* two years ago and *(c)* five years ago.

Mr. Freeman: According to the national directorate of the Blood Transfusion Service, the average daily stock of blood held by the transfusion service in 1989 was 19,800 units. This was the first year in which such a statistic has been collected.

Severn Trent Water

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer to the hon. and learned Member for Burton on 20 February, (1) what effective difference there is between the statutory and the non-statutory indemnity;

(2) what section of the statutory indemnity provided on 21 November 1989 for Severn Trent Water accepts liability for negligence.

Mr. Freeman: The statutory indemnity was issued under the terms of section 172 of the Water Act 1989 which permits my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to indemnify a water undertaker in respect of certain liabilities incurred by the undertaker only in connection with its increasing the fluoride content of any water it supplies.

The non-statutory indemnity was issued to cover liabilities incurred by the water undertaker in connection with the supply of fluoridated water to persons in its water region, or the exporting of this fluoridated water outside its water region, where the undertaker has not first increased the fluoride content.

The reasons for the issue of the non-statutory indemnity were fully explained in the minute which was laid before Parliament by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 23 November 1989. The non-statutory indemnity was issued on 22 December 1989 as no objection to the proposal to undertake this contingent liability was signified within the prescribed period.

Paragraph 2 of the statutory indemnity describes the terms of the indemnity given to Severn Trent Water.

Pendle Community Hospital

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimated opening date for the new Pendle community hospital.

Mr. Freeman: The latest estimated opening date for the new Pendle community hospital is September 1991.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received regarding extra funding to create more speech therapist posts in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations about various aspects of speech therapy services. It is for individual health authorities to determine the number of speech therapist posts to be provided in their area. In England, the number of speech therapists employed in the NHS increased by 80 per cent. between 1979 and 1988.

The funding of speech therapist posts in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Surgical Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost of prescribed surgical footwear; and what future plans he has to review the design of National Health Service surgical footwear.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The annual cost of surgical footwear prescribed through the hospital service is estimated at £20 million. The Department has recently issued for consultation with the industry a revised technical specification for orthopaedic footwear. North West Thames RHA, which acts as the centre of responsibility for the provision of surgical appliances and orthopaedic footwear, is responsible for approving manufacturers of orthotic appliances and surgical footwear.

Disabled People

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered disabled people in the Bolton area are currently living in their own homes, supported by the community care initiative; and what is the cost of providing such care to each individual.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold information showing where registered disabled people are living, or what level of funding is provided for their individual care needs.

Blood Products Imports

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount of blood products imported into the United Kingdom from overseas in each of the three years up to 1989, or the latest years for which figures are available; what was the cost of such imports; and which countries were the major suppliers.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the total amount of blood products imported into the United Kingdom is not held centrally.

Figures for 1986, 1987, 1988 (the most recent held) relating to the usage of factor VIII concentrate are given in the table:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
United Kingdom usage of imported Factor VIII concentrate (millions of international units)	53·8	59·2	55·2

These are imported from other European countries and North America.

Shropshire Population

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total adult population of Shropshire has been during each of the past five years.

Mr. Freeman: OPCS estimates of the resident population of Shropshire aged 18 and over are as follows:

Mid year	*Thousands*
1984	288·3
1985	293·0
1986	296·6
1987	301·0
1988	305·7

Transplants

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has now appointed the members of the Unrelated Live Transplant Regulatory Authority.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. I am pleased to announce that the chairman of the authority is Professor Martin Bobrow, Prince Philip professor of paediatric research at the united medical schools of Guy's and St. Thomas's. The other members are:

The Reverend Professor Gordon R. Dunstan, Professor Emeritus of Moral and Social Theology, King's College, London.
Dr. Philip A. Dyer, Head of Tissue Typing, St. Mary's Hospital, Manchester.
Mrs. Diana Eccles, Chairman, Ealing Health Authority.
Professor Mary G. McGeown, Queen's University, Belfast.
Sir Michael McNair-Wilson, Member of Parliament for Newbury.
Mr. Stuart G. Macpherson, Senior Lecturer in Surgery, University of Glasgow; Hon. Consultant Surgeon, Glasgow Health Board.
Dr. Netar P. Mallick, Senior Lecturer in Renal Disease, Manchester University; Physician in Charge, Department of Renal Medicine, Manchester Royal Infirmary.
Professor John R. Salaman, Professor of Transplant Surgery, University of Wales; Consultant Surgeon, Cardiff Royal Infirmary.
Miss Sally M. Taber, Director of Nursing, London Bridge Hospital.
Mr. James Wellbeloved, Director General, National Kidney Research Fund.
Mrs. Celia Wight, Senior Regional Transplant Co-ordinator, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the distance learning training material for district health authority and local authority staff employed on registration and inspection duties under the Registered Homes Act 1984 is to be issued.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government attach great importance to achieving high standards of care in residential and nursing homes. I am therefore pleased to announce the issue today of a training package for inspection staff—"Making Sense of Inspection: Registered Homes Act 1984: Training Course for Registration and Inspection Staff". We hope that all authorities will make full use of it.

The aim of the training package is to:

Provide officers undertaking work under the Registered Homes Act 1984 with a comprehensive knowledge and information base;

Provide a general model of regulation work applicable to all types of registered facilities and client groupings;

Provide a guide to the practice of registration and inspection work;

Enable staff in health authorities and social services departments to understand each other's role as well as their own;

Point to the range of individuals and organisations with whom registration and inspection staff need to react and the skills necessary to carry out their work professionally.

The training package contributes towards carrying forward the proposals for achieving high standards of care in the community care White Paper "Caring for People". For example, it emphasises the importance of assessing and promoting the quality of care provided and the quality of life to residents. The package will complement the guidance to be produced on what to look for in a good home, as foreshadowed in chapter 5 of the White Paper.

While aimed at the registration of independent sector homes, the package will also be relevant to monitoring standards in local authorities' own homes.

Consultants

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will announce the allocation of the remaining new consultant posts referred to in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today approved 65 posts for the remaining two years of this scheme, 35 for 1990-91 and 30 for 1991-92. This follows my announcement on 31 October last year of the first 35 posts for 1989-90.

As I said at that time, these new posts will help reduce waiting times in districts and specialties with particularly long waiting lists. They will also help reduce the working hours of junior doctors, and improve the career structure in the respective specialties.

As with the initial allocation, these posts were to be fully funded up to a maximum of £500,000 per year per post. This includes the cost of support staff, running costs and equipment. The average annual cost of these posts will be around £380,000, plus an average additional one-off starting cost of around £30,000.

The new posts are to be in: general surgery (12 posts); trauma and orthopaedic surgery (14); ear, nose and throat surgery (six); obstetrics and gynaecology (seven); opthalmology (nine); urology (eight); plastic surgery (five); and one post each in neurosurgery, accident and emergency, audiological medicine and paediatric surgery. They will be supported by appropriate numbers of medical, nursing, professional, technical and administrative staff.

Once all 100 new consultants are in post, the total annual cost of the scheme will be around £37 million. We expect the scheme to have a significant impact on some of the longest waiting times, and it will also provide a healthy boost to the expansion of the consultant grade.

Parliamentary Delegations

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give details of occasions when he has refused to meet delegations of regional hon. Members of a particular party affiliation;

(2) if he will make a statement on his decision to refuse to meet a delegation of Labour Members from the north-west to discuss the role of the chairman of the North Western regional health authority and health care in this region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My ministerial colleagues and I very rarely decline to meet delegations of hon. Members. On the occasion referred to by the hon. Member I declined because there had already been four meetings between Ministers and delegations of hon. Members from all parties from the north-west to discuss health care in the region in the two months either side of the hon. Member's request and I did not believe that any more could usefully be added to what had already been discussed. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health had also met the hon. Member to discuss local health issues shortly after he wrote.

If the hon. Member wishes to bring a delegation of hon. Members to raise new points I or one of my colleagues would be willing to meet them.

Hospital Sales

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals, mental institutions and other assets under the control of his Department have been sold in the last five years; and what is the sum of money received from the purchasers.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not routinely hold information relating to the numbers of hospitals, mental institutions and other health authority assets sold. The total sum received from sales of assets in the last five years are as follows:

Years	*£ million*
1984-85	50,655
1985-86	85,167
1986-87	148,996
1987-88	200,873
1988-89	271,339

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the money from the sale of hospitals, mental institutions and other assets under the control of his Department has been accounted for; and what is the method in which it has been reinvested.

Mr. Freeman: The total sum received by each health authority from the sale of hospitals, mental institutions and other assets is recorded in its annual accounts and by the Department in the appropriation account for vote XIV, 1. The receipts which are treated as appropriations in aid allow additional capital spending over cash limit allocations in the year in which they are received.

NHS Reform

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the activity of a National Health Service trust hospital will be monitored to ensure that *(a)* it provides the appropriate staff and facilities for teaching medical students where appropriate, *(b)* it meets its commitments for such teaching and *(c)* it continues to treat the appropriate range of diseases required for undergraduate medical teaching.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: National Health Service trusts will be directly accountable to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. They will need to satisfy him not only that they have undertaken to provide adequate facilities for teaching medical students, but that these undertakings have been met. In addition, as agents for the distribution of the service increment for teaching, regional health authorities will consult universities and agree with NHS trusts what facilities should be provided for teaching medical students. They will monitor the performance of trusts against these agreements, taking into account the views of universities.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of any firms of outside consultants and the terms of their contracts employed by his Department in connection with the National Health Service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

National Economic Research Associates
To report on contracting arrangements for patient services.

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
To assist in work on costing for patient services contracts.

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
To assist in work on costing for patient services contracts within Wirral Health Authority

Resource Management Services
To analyse the informal cost sharing arrangements between Medical Schools and Teaching Hospitals in Southampton Health Authority

Davies Design Consultancy
To help in the production of a booklet on the outpatient environment.

Price Waterhouse
To develop training material for Capital Charges.

BBL and D
To assist in production of GP's Funding Programme.

BBL and D
To prepare publicity leaflet on prescribing budgets for GPs.

BBL and D
To prepare artwork/layout of a second Working Paper on prescribing budgets.

BBL and D
To assist in work on Indicative Prescribing Budgets

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
To investigate District Information Systems.

Health Information Management Services
To co-ordinate the Departments Information project.

DBI Associates Ltd.
To recommend new arrangements for approval and monitoring of strategic IT projects.

Andersen Consulting
To investigate the IT requirements for providers of patient services.

Peat Marwick McClintock
To investigate the IT implications of proposed changes to Minimum Data Sets.

Peat Marwick McClintock
To investigate the requirements for patient identification on existing computer systems.

Andersen Consulting
To investigate the impact of the White Paper recommendations on existing computer based outpatient systems.

Pareto Consulting
To assist with the development of an IT strategy for the National Health Service.

Price Waterhouse
To develop NHS Trusts. Financial Management simulation exercise.

Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
NHS Trusts leadership and management skills study.

Andersen Consulting
To make recommendation on support for potential NHS Trusts.

Kings Fund College; Office for Public Management; Nuffield Institute; Management Advisory Service
To Develop Learning Sets for potential community care NHS Trusts.

David Richards
To prepare proposals for guidance and training for top Management in the NHS, to support introduction of local pay flexibility.

Coopers and Lybrand
To investigate the costing methods in the NHS Hospital Service and to determine the most appropriate for application in support of contract price setting.

The terms of these contracts were prepared on an individual basis in line with the specific requirements of the work undertaken, drawing as necessary on relevant expertise within the Department, and in line with the guidance issued by Treasury on employment of external consultants.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the agenda, papers and list of participants for the meeting organised by his Department on the subject of the National Health Service trusts on 22 and 23 February.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department will fund to study the impact of the Government's National Health Service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Health Service, supported by the Department of Health, is undertaking a wide range of projects designed to inform the implementation of the Government's proposals to improve services.

NHS Salaries

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the amount spent by the National Health Service on staff wages and salaries in each year since 1970 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Freeman: Information derived from annual accounts submitted to the Department for the financial years 1974-75 to 1988-89 is shown in the table:

National Health Service Revenue Expenditure on Salaries and Wages—England

	£000 (cash)	£000 (at 1988-89 prices)
1974-75	1,792,700	7,078,960
1975-76	2,358,604	7,407,007
1976-77	2,691,746	7,458,290
1977-78	2,921,599	7,111,610
1978-79	3,278,452	7,208,890
1979-80	3,992,720	7,517,334
1980-81	5,242,795	8,341,130
1981-82	5,724,522	8,295,462
1982-83	6,079,370	8,216,451
1983-84	6,413,654	8,281,502
1984-85	6,778,435	8,338,085
1985-86	7,149,107	8,345,868
1986-87	7,719,927	8,718,422
1987-88	8,504,072	9,120,617
1988-89	9,601,003	9,601,003

Sources:

Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities', those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and of family practitioner committees (FPCs). (For the earliest years the annual accounts of predecessor authorities e.g. area health authorities which were abolished on 1 April 1982).

Notes:

1. The figures include the total pay costs of the health authorities' directly and indirectly employed staff (agency, etc) and include employers' superannuation and national insurance contributions. Similar costs forming part of the administrative expenses of FPCs are included but payments to doctors, pharmacists and others contracted with the NHS to provide family practitioner services are excluded. Comparatively small salaries and wages costs charged to capital accounts by health authorities are also excluded.
2. The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1988-89 prices by use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator.
3. From 1 April 1974 (NHS Reorganisation) the accounts of health authorities included income and expenditure in respect of health services transferred from local government authorities to the NHS. Therefore, information for the years prior to 1974-75 is not comparable to that for more recent years.

Cancer

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of cancer in the United Kingdom in 1960, 1969 and 1989; and if he will make a statement on his assessment of the possible causes.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* There are over 200 different types of cancer. There are many different causes, but in the present state of knowledge tobacco is by far the commonest. The other information requested is as follows:

Registration numbers and rates (per 100,000) of newly diagnosed cases of cancer[1] and population by sex for 1961, 1969 and 1984.

	England and Wales Male	Female
1961[2]		
Number	56,785	54,615·0
Population[3]	22,346	23,820·0
Rate[4]	254·12	229·28
1969		
Number	77,661	73,804·0
Population[3]	23,752	25,074·8
Rate[4]	326·97	294·34
1984[2]		
Number	102,324	99,179·0
Population[3]	24,244	25,519·0
Rate[4]	422·06	388·65

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes 9th revision 140-208.
[2] 1961 and 1984 are, respectively, the first and last years for which this information is available.
[3] Population in thousands.
[4] Rate per 100,000 population.

Information on Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibilities of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Medicines Control Agency (Fees)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any assessment was made of the effects of the increase in Medicines Control Agency fees on research and development by smaller companies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* We would not expect the increased fees for product licences to act as a disincentive to research and development by smaller companies. It is believed that the charges for product licences represent only a small fraction of the total cost of bringing a novel medicine to the market place.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the recent increase in the licence fee charged by the Medicines Control Agency and what are the reasons for it.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The latest amending regulations—the Medicines (Fees Relating to Medicinal Products for Human Use) Amendment Regulations 1990 SI 1990 No. 210—incorporate a 70 per cent. increase in all the licence fees charged by the Medicines Control Agency.

When the Medicines Control Agency was established it was made clear that it was to be fully funded by licence fees. Fee levels were originally set too low to achieve this objective and have had to be increased. A full review of charges will take place over the next few months.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on reducing the Medicines Control Agency's fees for smaller companies on products with a limited market.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* When the new fee structure for the MCA was established on 1 April 1989 we promised that there would be a full review of the fees charged during 1989-90. The

review has had to be deferred but will take place in the next few months and any adjustment which we consider necessary will be incorporated in a further set of amending regulations to come into effect in June/July 1990.

However, in the meantime we have introduced concessions which give small companies additional time to pay fees.

Health Spending

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* total National Health Service spending and *(b)* hospital and community health service spending as a proportion of real national disposable income in each year since 1964.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The information requested, which is readily available only from 1974-75 onwards, is as follows:

Gross expenditure as a percentage of national disposable income (at 1985 prices)

Financial year	*National Health Service total*	*Hospital and community health service total*
1974-75	5·0	3·8
1975-76	5·2	3·9
1976-77	5·1	3·9
1977-78	4·9	3·7
1978-79	4·8	3·6
1979-80	4·8	3·6
1980-81	5·4	4·1
1981-82	5·5	4·1
1982-83	5·4	4·0
1983-84	5·3	3·9
1984-85	5·3	3·9
1985-86	5·1	3·7
1986-87	5·2	3·8
1987-88	5·2	3·7
1988-89	5·1	3·7
1989-90[1]	5·1	3·7

[1] Estimate.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reason the National Computing Centre gave for leaving employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The National Computing Centre is still operating under employment training.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number for employment training of *(a)* people in training, *(b)* agreed action plans at training agents, *(c)* referrals to training agents from employment service, *(d)* referrals from training agents to training managers, *(e)* starts at training managers, *(f)* trainees who completed more than the three months' training, *(g)* employment training allowances paid and *(h)* trainees who successfully completed action plans for each of the months September 1988 to December 1989 inclusive for Great Britain, the standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Information is not available in the precise form requested. Information is available only for the eight Training Agency regions in England and for Scotland and Wales. The latest figures of employment training filled places are given in table 1. Action plans agreed at training agents are given in table 2. Referrals from the employment service to employment training are given in table 3. Information as requested for referrals from training agents to training managers is not available. Starts with training managers are given at table 4. Information about the length of time spent on the programme by trainees who leave each month, about the number of allowances paid and about the number of trainees successfully completing action plans over the period is not available.

Table 1
Employment training filled places
September 1988 to December 1989

Training agency region	*South East*	*London*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North West*	*Northern*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*[1]Great Britain*
1988											
September	3,800	4,600	3,000	5,200	3,900	9,800	6,700	4,400	2,400	4,400	48,000
October	5,200	6,300	4,300	7,700	5,700	10,200	9,900	7,100	4,400	6,600	67,000
November	6,300	9,400	5,700	10,100	7,600	14,500	13,400	9,700	6,000	9,100	92,000
December	7,100	10,600	6,900	12,100	8,900	16,000	15,500	11,900	7,400	11,700	108,000
1989											
January	8,500	13,300	8,400	15,100	10,600	19,100	18,500	14,500	9,300	14,000	131,000
February	9,600	15,200	10,000	18,200	12,900	22,100	22,500	18,000	11,900	17,900	158,000
March	10,000	16,600	10,900	20,700	14,000	24,000	24,900	20,100	13,400	21,000	176,000
April	10,300	17,500	11,400	22,300	15,000	24,800	26,000	21,200	14,200	22,100	185,000
May	10,906	17,900	11,600	22,600	15,400	25,100	26,600	22,000	14,600	22,500	189,000
June	11,500	18,300	11,800	22,800	15,500	25,200	27,600	23,000	14,800	23,200	194,000
July	14,500	19,000	11,800	23,200	16,400	25,200	29,000	24,400	15,800	23,700	203,000
August	14,200	19,000	11,500	23,600	16,800	25,100	28,700	24,700	16,000	24,400	204,000
September	14,900	20,200	12,000	23,400	16,900	25,200	29,100	24,900	16,500	25,100	208,000
October	14,900	20,700	12,300	23,200	16,800	25,200	28,800	24,300	16,600	25,700	209,000
November	14,800	21,100	12,200	23,200	16,800	25,200	29,800	24,400	16,600	26,400	212,000
December	14,300	21,000	11,900	22,500	16,600	25,100	28,800	24,200	16,100	26,100	208,000

[1] Great Britain total includes small number of trainees at residential training colleges and large contractors not included in regional figures.

Table 2
Employment Training
Action plans agreed at training agents
September 1988 to December 1989

Training agency region	South East	London	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands and Eastern	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	Northern	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
1988											
September	3,200	3,200	1,700	4,300	3,100	4,200	4,100	4,400	1,900	4,100	34,300
October	3,100	4,200	2,300	4,400	3,600	5,100	5,800	4,400	2,500	5,000	40,300
November	3,600	4,700	2,400	5,000	3,600	5,700	6,400	4,500	3,100	6,600	45,400
December	3,300	4,400	1,800	4,600	2,600	4,500	5,200	3,600	2,400	5,500	37,800
1989											
January	3,500	4,900	2,200	5,000	3,700	5,800	6,600	5,100	3,200	6,100	46,000
February	3,900	5,700	2,400	6,100	3,700	6,000	7,500	5,800	3,700	7,300	52,200
March	4,300	6,100	2,800	5,900	4,000	5,600	7,200	5,300	3,400	7,800	52,300
April	3,600	4,500	2,300	4,900	3,600	5,100	6,400	4,600	2,800	5,700	43,700
May	3,000	4,300	2,000	4,000	3,000	5,000	5,300	4,300	2,800	5,300	38,900
June	3,200	4,700	2,200	4,500	3,400	4,800	6,400	4,700	2,700	6,200	42,800
July	3,500	4,200	1,800	4,300	3,100	4,700	6,000	4,000	2,300	4,500	38,200
August	2,900	4,400	1,800	3,900	3,100	4,600	5,600	3,900	2,200	5,500	37,900
September	3,600	5,000	2,800	5,200	3,000	6,300	6,600	5,100	3,200	6,400	47,700
October	3,100	4,600	2,200	4,200	2,700	4,900	6,300	4,400	2,800	5,800	41,000
November	2,600	4,700	2,400	4,400	3,000	4,900	6,000	4,400	2,700	5,900	41,000
December	2,400	3,900	1,800	3,400	2,500	4,600	4,400	3,400	1,900	4,300	32,600

Table 3
Employment Service Referrals to Employment Training:
September 1988 to December 1989

Employment Service Region	London and South East	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands and Eastern	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	Northern	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
1988										
September	20,700	5,100	10,300	7,500	10,100	12,700	12,500	5,200	12,300	96,500
October	17,900	4,400	8,700	6,700	9,100	11,400	7,700	5,400	11,700	82,900
November	16,800	3,900	9,100	6,300	8,900	11,100	6,400	5,700	12,100	80,400
December	14,100	3,500	8,200	4,600	7,600	9,200	5,700	5,100	10,500	68,300
1989										
January	18,200	5,000	10,500	6,700	10,100	13,700	8,200	6,100	13,100	91,600
February	18,200	4,800	10,400	6,600	8,900	12,900	7,800	6,200	14,000	89,900
March	18,700	5,206	10,700	6,600	10,000	14,700	7,800	6,400	15,800	95,800
April	16,800	4,300	8,600	6,600	9,300	12,800	7,100	5,700	11,100	82,300
May	15,600	3,800	7,900	5,400	7,800	11,000	6,400	5,000	11,300	74,300
June	19,000	3,400	9,600	6,900	9,200	14,300	8,000	5,500	15,300	91,200
July	16,000	3,400	8,500	5,500	7,700	12,600	6,600	5,000	10,300	75,700
August	16,900	3,200	8,100	5,600	7,800	11,800	6,600	4,700	12,500	77,200
September	19,500	4,200	9,300	6,300	8,500	13,800	7,200	6,300	13,800	89,000
October	15,300	4,000	7,700	5,000	7,300	11,900	6,600	5,100	12,400	75,200
November	15,800	3,700	7,400	5,900	7,800	11,600	6,400	5,100	12,000	75,700
December	12,900	3,000	5,800	4,600	6,500	8,700	4,600	3,800	9,100	59,100

Table 4
Starts at employment training managers
September 1988 to December 1989

Training agency region	South East	London	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands and Eastern	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	Northern	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain[1]
1988											
September	1,500	2,500	1,100	2,500	1,800	3,000	3,000	2,400	1,400	2,300	21,500
October	2,100	3,100	1,700	3,700	2,700	4,500	5,000	3,200	2,000	3,100	31,100
November	2,000	3,100	2,000	3,800	2,900	5,500	5,500	3,600	2,700	4,100	35,200
December	1,700	2,400	1,700	3,300	2,200	4,400	4,100	2,900	2,200	3,900	28,900
1989											
January	2,300	3,800	2,100	4,300	2,900	5,500	5,500	3,600	2,900	3,700	36,700
February	2,500	3,400	2,500	5,000	3,600	6,100	7,100	4,800	3,600	5,400	43,900
March	2,100	3,800	2,300	4,900	3,200	5,400	6,500	4,700	3,200	6,000	42,200
April	2,300	3,100	2,000	4,100	3,100	4,900	5,800	3,800	2,900	4,400	36,300
May	1,600	2,600	1,700	3,300	2,400	4,100	4,800	3,200	2,300	4,400	30,000
June	2,400	3,100	1,900	3,800	2,800	4,500	6,300	4,100	2,600	4,800	36,400
July	4,500	3,100	1,500	3,300	3,000	3,800	5,300	3,600	2,700	3,400	34,200
August	1,900	2,700	1,200	3,200	2,500	3,500	4,500	3,000	2,300	4,500	29,300
September	3,400	4,800	2,300	4,500	3,500	5,500	6,200	4,900	3,700	5,600	44,200
October	2,500	3,300	1,900	3,800	2,800	4,600	5,200	3,700	2,900	4,800	35,600

Training agency region	South East	London	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands and Eastern	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	Northern	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain[1]
November	2,300	3,600	1,700	3,800	2,800	4,800	5,600	3,700	2,400	4,900	36,200
December	1,500	2,600	1,400	2,900	2,100	3,700	3,700	2,900	1,900	3,500	26,300

[1] Great Britain total includes small number of trainees at residential training colleges and large contractors not included in regional figures

Youth Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment at constant 1989-90 prices if he will give the spending on YTS and employment training for the past five years and the projected spending over the next three years.

Mr. Nicholls: The expenditure on YTS and employment training by the Employment Department Group Training Agency (and its predecessors, the Training Commission and the Manpower Services Commission) is as follows:

	YTS (£ million)	*Employment Training (£ million)*
1985-86	1,011·1	—
1986-87	1,041·0	—
1987-88	1,137·7	—
1988-89	1,063·4	454·8
1989-90	983·0	1,112·0
1990-91	836·0	1,151·9
1991-92	716·2	1,085·6
1992-93	654·5	1,071·8

The figures shown are at constant (estimated) 1989-90 prices and were calculated by use of the GDP deflator index shown in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Youth training scheme figures exclude community industry (included under the heading "Youth Training" in the public expenditure White Paper), evaluation, research and development, and marketing.

Planned expenditure on YTS reflects a substantial decline in the number of 16 and 17-year-old entrants to the labour force. Also, youth training, which will replace YTS from 29 May and be increasingly delivered by training and enterprise councils, incorporates funding flexibilities to encourage a higher level of employer contributions towards training costs than has been the case under YTS.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints about the level of training have been received by training managers over the past year in respect of *(a)* YTS and *(b)* employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many placements on *(a)* YTS and *(b)* employment training have been terminated as a result of dissatisfaction on the part of the Training Agency with the training provided in respect of the past year.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to conduct a survey of trainee satisfaction in respect of either YTS or employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Existing surveys of trainees who leave either YTS or employment training cover this aspect of evaluation.

Astra Training Services

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the estimated value of the skillcentre sites sold to Astra Training Services; and whether any estimate was made of their development value.

Mr. Nicholls: All Skills Training Agency sites were valued prior to the sale, and their potential development value was estimated by commercial property advisers appointed by the Government. Were my right hon. and learned Friend to give an estimate of the value of sites included in the sale package announced earlier this month, *(Official Report,* 13 February 1990, column 141), this could be deducted from the valuation of all STA sites published in the STA's trading account for 1988-89 (which will be published shortly), to produce an estimate of the value of those sites not included in the sale package. This could have a detrimental effect when these remaining sites are offered for sale.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the calculations that gave rise to the sum of £11 million being paid to Astra in respect of the skillcentres sold to it.

Mr. Nicholls: The payment of some £11 million to Astra Training Services Limited is the price which emerged from open, competitive bidding and subsequent negotiation. Publication of calculations undertaken by bidders to arrive at their offers would constitute a breach of commercial confidentiality and could disclose bidders' future plans for the business to potential competitors.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if there will be any requirement on Astra in the sale conditions to continue training at any site.

Mr. Nicholls: One of the Government's chief objectives for the sale of the Skills Training Agency (STA) has been to transfer into the private sector as much as possible of the STA's training business. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the aim of Astra Training Services Limited is to run a training business.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many construction firms are protected from the levy to the construction industry training board as a result of the payroll figure of £15,000 contained in the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: About 16,000 small employers are exempt from levy under the provisions of paragraph 5(1) of the

schedule of the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1989. This is about 29 per cent. of firms on the board's levy register.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to allow construction firms of any size to opt out of participation in the construction industry training board and run their own training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: We are looking to employers to take more responsibility for training their work force. Grants from levy funds are made available by the construction industry training board to employers for training undertaken to industry agreed standards.

We will be asking the board when it is reconstituted to bring forward proposals which will extinguish the contribution made by the better training employers to the levy fund.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what factors he considered when setting the figure of £15,000 payroll under the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1989 as the starting point of contributions to the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: Two main factors were considered before deciding that the level should remain the same as that in the previous order—first, the need for firms to contribute to the costs of training the pool of workers upon which employers draw, and, secondly, that the smallest firms, that is those with the equivalent of a single employee, should be excluded from the levy.

Bolton Job Club

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered disabled unemployed have used the services of the Bolton job club during each of the last three years; and how many have been successful in obtaining employment with this assistance.

Mr. Eggar: During the past three years a total of 14 registered disabled people have used the services of Bolton job clubs. Of these, 10 people left to start a job and one person went on to employment training.

For each of the past three years the breakdown is:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Registered disabled people leaving jobclubs	2	2	10
Registered disabled people leaving to start a job	2	1	7
Registered disabled people leaving to start Employment Training	—	1	—

In the same period a further 24 people with health problems who were not registered as disabled used the services of Bolton job clubs. Of these, 12 people left to start a job and three people went on to employment training, further education or the enterprise allowance scheme.

Radiation

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make a statement on the Health and Safety Commission's consultative document on additional guidance on radiation protection;

(2) what revised estimates of risk from radiation the Health and Safety Commission took into account when issuing its recent consultative document on radiation protection.

Mr. Nicholls: The consultative document published on 5 February by the Health and Safety Commission sets out draft guidance for employers on measures to maintain levels of protection for employees against ionising radiations in the light of recent revisions of risk estimates. The Health and Safety Commission took into account revised international expert thinking on the risks from radiation, arising out of further information about the survivors of the Japanese atomic bombings, and subsequent interim advice from the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make a statement on workplace levels of radiation;

(2) what proposals the Health and Safety Commission has to recommend a reduction in workplace levels of radiation.

Mr. Nicholls: Levels of exposure to ionising radiations at the workplace have decreased since the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 (IRR 85) came into force.

The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) has recently issued a consultative document containing proposals for interim action pending receipt of revised international recommendations. The HSC's working group on ionising radiations will in due course consider the revised recommendations and make proposals for further action.

Tourism

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has commissioned any research into the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation within the British tourist industry after the introduction of the poll tax or community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Health and Safety Executive sought assistance or advice from the railways inspectorate over issues arising from the construction of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will announce the results of the review of the rates of allowance payable under the job release scheme.

Mr. Eggar: Although the job release scheme closed to new applicants on 31 January 1988, the allowances will

continue to be paid to participants for up to five years. Following our annual review, the allowances payable from 9 April 1990 under the job release scheme will be as follows:

Those who are married with a dependent wife where net income from all sources does not exceed £15 a week: £84·00 taxable. Those who do not have a dependent wife or whose wife's income exceeds £15 a week: £69·15 taxable. The spouse's earnings limit which affects whether the higher or lower rate is paid has been raised to £15 from £14.

TRANSPORT

M3

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding his proposals for the completion of the M3 at Winchester.

Mr. Parkinson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have decided that the published proposals for the final section of the M3 around Winchester to replace the heavily congested bypass should go ahead.

The decision follows two lengthy public inquiries conducted by independent inspectors nominated by the Lord Chancellor. Both inspectors considered the relative merits of the published scheme for a cutting across Twyford down and several alternative routes put forward by objectors, including those for routing the motorway in twin-bored tunnels under the down and for building the motorway on the line of the existing bypass.

Because of the adverse effects on the Winchester water meadows and residential areas of the city, the inspectors recommended that western routes following the line of the existing bypass should not be built. They endorsed the Department's novel proposals for removing the bypass completely and restoring the area to link the historic and recreational areas of the water meadows and St. Catherine's hill.

The inspectors were impressed by the alternatives for twin-bored tunnels under Twyford down. We too were attracted by the concept of tunnels which would have reduced the amount of land required from the east Hampshire area of outstanding natural beauty, the St. Catherine's hill site of special scientific interest and the two scheduled ancient monuments on Twyford down.

However, we agree with the inspectors that twin-bored tunnels would not be without environmental problems. The two tunnels, each large enough to take three lanes of motorway traffic and a hard shoulder, with portals on either side of Twyford down, would be prominent features in the area of outstanding natural beauty and emphasised by the necessary lighting. There would be considerable problems in disposing of vast quantities of surplus rock, and a tunnel scheme would be less efficient for local traffic distribution.

Such tunnels would be at the forefront of tunnelling technology, and the time necessary to design and construct them would delay seriously the completion of this much-needed section of motorway. Also, because of the innovative nature of the tunnels, the estimated costs of such a scheme varied widely at the inquiries. The 1987-88 inspector concluded that a tunnel solution would cost about £92 million more than the published scheme.

Both the inspectors concluded, and we agreed with them, that the advantages of a tunnel scheme would not outweigh the substantial additional costs and the extensive delay in completing the M3. We have decided, in accordance with the recommendation of the two independent inquiry inspectors, that the published proposals are the right solution to the urgent need to replace the heavily congested Winchester bypass which has been the subject of considerable debate for almost 20 years.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposal from British Rail on which he might expect to make a decision on the Channel tunnel to London rail link.

Mr. Portillo: Not yet.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek powers to bring forward proposals for a rail link from the proposed Channel tunnel to London.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail and its chosen joint venture partner, Eurorail, announced at the end of last year their intention to introduce a private Bill in November 1990.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he has had recently on the rail link from the proposed Channel tunnel to London;

(2) when he last met Eurorail to discuss the Channel tunnel link; and what matters were discussed;

(3) when he last met representatives of British Rail to discuss the rail link from the proposed Channel tunnel to London; and what was the outcome of those discussions;

(4) when he last met Trafalgar House to discuss the Channel tunnel rail link and what were the conclusions reached.

Mr. Portillo: I met representatives of British Rail and Eurorail consortium which includes Trafalgar House on Monday 19 February and heard of progress with their work to establish a joint venture.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has contributed to the development of the Channel tunnel to London high-speed rail link.

Mr. Portillo: The responsibility for planning railways rests with British Rail. My Department has provided information on Government policy and on road plans for which it is the highway authority.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met Ove Arup to discuss the Channel tunnel rail link; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Portillo: I have not myself met Ove Arup, but my officials have done so and reported to me on its proposals for rail links to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek powers to enable him to commit public funds to ensure the development of a Channel tunnel to London rail link.

Mr. Portillo: No.

European Rail System

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the topics he has discussed within the European Community regarding railways in the last three months.

Mr. Portillo: At the meeting of the European Council of Transport Ministers which I attended on 4-5 December, there was a debate on Community railway policy. The Council invited the Commission to set up a working party to look at a high-speed network and the scope for technical harmonisation.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek powers to enable him to standardise the height, width and length of British freight wagons with those used on continental railways; and what his Department is doing to develop compatibility.

Mr. Portillo: No. Decisions on rolling stock are entirely a matter for British Rail. I understand that BR is planning to use advanced wagon designs for Channel tunnel freight which will make it possible for larger loads than at present to be carried on the existing United Kingdom loading gauge. Despite the difference in loading gauge, large fleets of wagons and containers already run between the United Kingdom and mainland Europe.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on European Community financial support for railway upgrading *(a)* in Spain and *(b)* in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: During 1989-90, British Rail has received nearly £21 million in grants from the European regional development fund. Figures for Spain are not available to my Department.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received from British Rail to convert British freight railways lines to UIC gauge.

Mr. Portillo: None. BR plans to use small wheel bogie wagons for Channel tunnel freight. These will be able to carry larger loads on the existing United Kingdom loading gauge and BR considers that they are likely to be more commercially viable than expensive infrastructure modifications.

A46

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from farmers and other local residents regarding his Department's proposal to close crossings on the A46 trunk road in the vicinity of Thrussington and Seagrave, Leicestershire; and whether he will outline the consultation procedure which will be followed to take account of the views of residents.

Mr. Atkins: Since December last year, the Department has received 34 letters from 20 local farmers and residents about the proposed closure of crossings on the A46 near Seagrave and Thrussington, including letters from both parish councils. I have also received two letters from my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton. A traffic regulation order will be promoted to close the junction between Seagrave and Thrussington and other nearby crossings on the A46. To prepare this, the Department will consult in advance farmers and residents whose property fronts on to the A46, to establish what use is made of each crossing. A draft traffic regulation order will then be published, taking into account the views of frontagers. It will be open to formal objections which the Department will consider before deciding whether or not to make or modify the order, or to hold a public inquiry.

Heavy Lorries

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on *(a)* the increase in the payload of heavy lorries and *(b)* changes in the average haul length since the legalisation of 38-tonne trucks.

Mr. Atkins: In 1983, the maximum weight limit for five-axle articulated vehicles was increased from 32·5 tonnes gross vehicle weight to 38 tonnes gross vehicle weight.

A comparison with years before 1983 is not possible since statistics of road haulage prior to 1983 are based on unladen weight and not gross vehicle weight categories. However, there were very few 38-tonne trucks operating in 1983, so that comparisons between 1983 and 1988, the most recent year for which data are available, give a reasonable indication of the effect of the change.

The design payload of a vehicle clearly depends on its axle configuration and body type, and it is estimated that, on average, five-axle 38-tonne vehicles can carry up to 30 tonnes, whereas 33-tonne vehicles can carry up to 24 tonnes. The average load carried by vehicles, on loaded journeys, has risen from 14·8 tonnes in 1983 to 18 tonnes in 1988 for large articulated vehicles – ie, over 33 tonnes GVW, and from 8·4 tonnes to 10·9 tonnes for smaller articulated vehicles over the same period.

The corresponding figures for average length of haul are from 154 km in 1983 to 137 km for larger articulated vehicles and 122 km in 1983 to 109 km in 1988 for the smaller vehicles.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to legislate for the shortening of the average haul length of heavy lorries.

Mr Atkins: No. Operators should be free to decide the length of haul, subject to their customers' requirements.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average fine for overloading vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: The average fine for offences detected by the Department's traffic examiners is about £155.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average fine for tachograph violations.

Mr. Atkins: The average fine for offences detected by the Department's traffic examiners is about £80.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the police role in spot checking vehicles for weight and tachometer offences.

Mr. Atkins: Police assistance is required at Department of Transport roadside checks to stop heavy goods vehicles for checks by enforcement staff. Some police forces also carry out their own spot checks.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to increase the number of heavy goods vehicles spot checked for tachograph and weight violations; how many spot check offenders are prosecuted; and what steps he is taking to increase the number of offenders prosecuted and fined.

Mr. Atkins: The annual national enforcement plan sets targets for enforcement by Department of Transport traffic examiners. In 1988-89, 52 per cent. more HGVs were weighed and 40 per cent. more tachograph charts checked than in the previous year. In 1988-89 nearly 8,200 prosecutions were brought, including weight and tachograph offences. The police and local authority trading standards officers also check weigh vehicles and the police check tachographs. Where violations are detected, offenders will be liable to prosecution.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to transfer the railway inspectorate to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Parkinson: I have agreed with the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission that officials should discuss the possibility of transferring the inspectorate's staff to the commission and whether an agency agreement can be made under section 13(1)*(b)* of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to enable railway safety work to be undertaken. The discussions should be completed later this year, after which a decision will be made.

Roadworks, Hertfordshire

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the forthcoming roadworks on the M1 and M25 motorways in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Atkins: At a media briefing earlier today, I gave details of the major roadworks which are to begin in March on the M1 and M25 motorways in Hertfordshire.

We shall be seeking to make information on these essential works widely available to enable drivers to plan their journeys appropriately. Leaflets are being distributed to the travelling public and the road haulage industry and appropriate signs will be displayed on the affected roads.

Copies of the information leaflet are available in the Library for the benefit of hon. Members who use these motorways.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Paternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what paternity leave is allowed to staff in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: At present paternity leave is not available to civil servants. The Treasury is, however, finalising arrangements for the introduction of an entitlement to two days' paid paternity leave for home civil servants. The Department of Finance and Personnel is also considering the implications of this for the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office have made full use of the rules which at present exist for granting special leave and consider applications sympathetically.

Ambulance Workers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to meet the wage claims of the ambulance workers in Northern Ireland and to undertake discussions with officials of their trade union about a pay review formula.

Mr. Needham: No. Increases in pay and other improvements agreed at national level are automatically adopted and implemented in Northern Ireland.

Harbours

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the minimum depth of water at low tide in each of the principal fishing harbours in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At mean low water during spring tides, the design depths at the entrance and landing and berthing areas of Northern Ireland's three main fishing ports of Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie are as follows:

	Entrance (feet)	*Landing and berthing areas (feet)*
Kilkeel	6	6
Ardglass	12	8
Portavogie	8	15

The Northern Ireland fishery harbour authority, which has responsibilities for these harbours, has a policy of continuous dredging at Kilkeel to maintain depth. There are no siltation problems at Ardglass and Portavogie.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each year since 1971 the number of extradition requests made by the Royal Ulster Constabulary for persons sought for terrorist offences and non-terrorist offences.

Mr. Cope: The information is as follows:

Year	*Terrorist offences*	*Non-terrorist offences*
1971	16	15
1972	10	8
1973	5	14
1974	6	24
1975	10	10
1976	14	20
1977	8	17
1978	7	33
1979	—	14
1980	5	18
1981	11	20
1982	3	34
1983	5	22
1984	1	13
1985	5	33
1986	6	—
1987	30	—
1988	5	4
1989	7	—

Household Equipment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what percentage of households in Northern Ireland have *(a)* a tumble drier, *(b)* a washing

machine, *(c)* a deep freeze and *(d)* a refrigerator; what was the percentage five years and 10 years ago; and what were the percentages in the United Kingdom as a whole at those times;

(2) what percentage of households in Northern Ireland have *(a)* central heating, *(b)* a telephone, *(c)* a television and *(d)* a car: what was the percentage five years and 10 years ago: and what were the percentages for the United Kingdom as a whole at those times;

(3) what percentage of households in Northern Ireland have *(a)* a video, *(b)* a home computer, *(c)* a microwave oven and *(d)* a dishwasher and what was the percentage five years and 10 years ago; and what were the percentages for the United Kingdom as a whole at those times.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 20 February 1990]*: The table provides available information on the percentage of households in Northern Ireland and in the United Kingdom that possessed the consumer durables about which information is sought. The figures relate to the most recent year for which information is available. The table provides similar data for 1983 and for 1978. As noted in the table, comparisons are in some instances with Great Britain where United Kingdom data are unavailable.

Ownership of consumer durables Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom 1978—1988
Estimates based on sample surveys

	1988		1983		1978	
	Northern Ireland[1]	*United Kingdom*[2]	*Northern Ireland*[1]	*United Kingdom*[2]	*Northern Ireland*[1]	*United Kingdom*[2]
Proportion of households owning						
Tumble drier	37	[3]42	22	[3]28	[4]—	[4]—
Washing machine	84	85	73	81	64	75
Deep freezer	58	75	33	[3]57	[4]—	[4]—
Refrigerator	96	98	89	97	75	92
Central heating	75	77	55	64	36	54
Telephone	76	85	66	77	43	62
Television	97	98	95	97	87	96
Car/van	60	66	58	62	53	58
Video recorder	42	50	15	[3]18	[4]—	[4]—
Home computer	13	17	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—
Microwave oven	29	[3]39	2	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—
Dishwasher	9	[3]10	6	[3]5	[4]—	[4]—
Base = households sampled	3,169	7,265	2,940	6,973	533	5,450

[1] Continuous Household Survey.
[2] Family Expenditure Survey.
[3] General Household Survey (Great Britain only).
[4] Item not recorded.

DEFENCE

Empty Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the annual management and maintenance costs of empty residential properties belonging to his Department by region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence does not keep information on its residential properties in the form requested.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of properties owned by his Department and suitable for residential accommodation has been empty for *(a)* up to a year and *(b)* over a year; and where these properties are located, by region or local authority area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Statistics are not collected in the precise form requested. The latest figures available show that on 30 November 1989 there were 76,068 service married quarters, of which 10·9 per cent. had been vacant for under one year and 5·4 per cent. vacant for over one year. At 31 December 1989, of 1,790 civilian houses owned by the MOD, 5·8 per cent had been vacant for under six months and 6·7 per cent. for over six months. The breakdown by region is:

Percentage of Service Married Quarters vacant by region as at 30 November 1989

Region	*Under 1 Year*	*Over 1 Year*
Northern	12·1	5·4
Yorkshire/Humberside	13·7	7·3
East Midlands	11·9	18·6
East Anglia	8·5	3·7
South East	9·8	4·3
South West	10·5	4·0
West Midlands	9·6	8·3
North West	13·3	0·7
Wales	19·0	4·7
Scotland	14·2	7·0
Northern Ireland	11·5	1·2

Percentage of civilian houses vacant by region as at 31 December 1989

Region	*Under 6 months*	*Over 6 months*
Northern	3·8	24·5
South West	2·6	17·3
South East	7·3	0·8
West Midlands	nil	5·3
Scotland	3·4	15·4
Wales	6·5	9·7

Some of these vacant properties are in the process of disposal, others will be undergoing major maintenance or refurbishment, and yet others are allocated and awaiting the arrival of the families to the unit.

Royal Arsenal West

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the main features of his Department's proposed development of the Royal Arsenal west site as presented to the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are pursuing a comprehensive approach to the disposal of the Royal Arsenal west site. Our proposals envisage a mixed development including leisure, retail, business and residential uses, which will be sensitive to the many heritage features of the site.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why it was decided to freeze the social fund community care grant budget.

Mr. Scott: I announced on 10 November 1989 in reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) at column *812* that the community care grant budget will be increased from £60 million in 1989-90 to £61 million in 1990-91.

Sick Pay

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the factors which caused him to raise the upper limit on the lower earnings band in respect of statutory sick pay from £83·99 to £124·99; and what is the expected saving in statutory sick pay as a result.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Raising the earnings band to £124·99 restores the balance between the proportion of employees entitled to the higher rate of statutory sick pay and those entitled to less than this, to about what it was when the statutory sick pay scheme was introduced in April 1983. The saving in public expenditure from this proposal is estimated as just under £30 million. As 91 per cent. of employees are employed by businesses with occupational sick pay schemes, which will make up any difference in statutory sick pay, the great majority of employees will not experience any reduction in the payments made to them when sick.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 19 January, *Official Report*, column *479*, (1) he will introduce regulations requiring occupational sick pay schemes to include transfer rights in relation to payments for long-term incapacity where length of service is a factor in the calculation of such payments; and if he will make a statement;

(2) he will introduce regulations requiring all occupational sick pay schemes to pay benefits in respect of long-term incapacity of equal or greater value than those to which a person would have been entitled under the state earnings-related pension scheme's additional component to invalidity pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. Decisions on the terms and conditions of individual occupational sick pay schemes are matters for that scheme's trustees in consultation with all relevant parties as appropriate.

Industrial Injuries and Diseases

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on Monday 19 February, *Official Report*, columns *549-50*, how many of the new claims and review applications were made at his Department's local offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Scott: The available information is that, up to 12 February 1990, 1,760 new claims and review applications were made at Greenock and Port Glasgow local offices under regulation 13 of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries and Diseases) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1986.

Disability

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to "Short Changed By Disability", published by the Disablement Income Group, a copy of which has been sent to him; if there is any action he will be taking and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We shall be considering the results of this survey. We shall be interested to compare its findings, based on a sample of 87 people, with the results of the 1985-88 surveys we commissioned from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, based on a sample of over 10,000 disabled people.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* ex-service men and *(b)* widows of ex-service men are receiving benefits arising from their suffering from leukaemia or myeloma which is deemed to be attributable to, or aggravated by, service in the British nuclear test programme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The war pensions scheme administered by the Department provides for pensions where there is reliable evidence which raises reasonable doubt that a condition is caused or aggravated by service, or that death was due to or substantially hastened by this. It is accepted that the evidence raises such a doubt in the case of participants in the British nuclear test programme who have contracted leukaemia (excluding chronic lymphatic leukaemia) or multiple myeloma. Any claim to a war pension by such service men or their widows is therefore likely to succeed. One war disablement pension and six war widows pensions have been awarded as a result.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to amend the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 so that the retirement pension is paid from the date of retirement rather than the first Monday after retirement; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so. Retirement pension is a regular weekly payment and is not paid for part weeks. The current provisions ensure that everyone is entitled to a full week's pension within a week of retirement.

Community Charge

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what element and how much of an unemployed claimant's income support has been provided to enable them to meet their 20 per cent. liability for the community charge for *(a)* single claimants, *(b)* married claimants, *(c)* those over 25 years and *(d)* those under 25 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 5 February 1990 at column *524*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons he estimates are entitled to poll tax benefit rebate; what is the breakdown of these by claimant group; and how many of those entitled in each group have been awarded a rebate so far of *(a)* up to 19 per cent., of their poll tax, *(b)* 20 to 39 per cent., *(c)* 40 to 59 per cent., *(d)* 60 to 79 per cent. and *(e)* 80 per cent.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 8 February 1990]*: Estimates of numbers entitled to community charge benefit can be obtained only when data from the relevant family expenditure survey is published. Estimates of the average number of community charge benefit recipients for 1990-91 are set out in the table :

Estimate of community charge benefit recipients broken down by client group and ratio of community charge benefit to community charge by individuals (000's)

Proportion of community charge (net of transitional relief) paid for by community charge benefit

Group	*(a)* *<20 per cent.*	*(b)* *20-39 per cent.*	*(c)* *40-59 per cent.*	*(d)* *60-79 per cent*	*(e)* *80 per cent*	*Total*
Pensioners (80+)	20	40	80	140	440	720
Pensioners (75-79)	20	90	110	200	380	810
Pensioners (70-74)	50	100	200	330	240	910
Pensioners (60-69)	120	190	250	310	570	1,430
Pensioners (disabled)	40	60	50	70	250	470
Disabled under 60	30	50	70	160	360	690
Lone parents	10	10	10	10	700	740
Couples with children (counting a couple as two people)	160	110	40	20	910	1,240
Others	200	330	510	400	1,300	2,740
Total	650	990	1,320	1,640	5,150	9,750

Note: Sum of Columns Rows may not equal totals given because of rounding.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Televised Parliamentary Proceedings

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will arrange an exhibition illustrating the various techniques available for assisting the deaf and hard of hearing to follow televised parliamentary proceedings.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In its report setting out the framework for the televising experiment, the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House expressed in paragraph 59 the hope that the television companies would

"make every effort to meet the needs of the deaf, so far as is consistent with their ability to produce reasonably clear television pictures".

This is a subject of great concern to many Members, as evidenced by the number of petitions and early-day motions on the subject.

As part of its monitoring of the progress of the experiment, the Committee has decided to examine the various options available for assisting the deaf community in following televised parliamentary proceedings. Accordingly, with the co-operation of the broadcasters and organisations representing the deaf, the Committee has arranged an exhibition in the Jubilee Room on Monday 5 March. This will consist of a series of short films illustrating the differing techniques for the subtitling of pre-recorded material, semi-live broadcasts (ie news programmes containing some cued and pre-recorded material), and live parliamentary debates, respectively. The effect of incorporating a sign language inset into television pictures of parliamentary proceedings will also be illustrated. In addition, some of the equipment used for applying these techniques will be on display and representatives of the broadcasters and of organisations representing the deaf will be available to answer questions.

There will be special viewings of the exhibition for Members of the House at 3.30 and 4.30 pm. In addition there will be facilities for the press and broadcasting media to see the exhibition at 2.30 pm and the Select Committee will have a separate private showing at 6 pm.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Tote (Privatisation)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be publishing the feasibility study on the privatisation of Tote bookmakers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The advice in the report by Lloyds merchant bank on the feasibility of privatising the Tote will not be published because it was made in confidence to my right hon. and learned Friend and contains commercially and managerially sensitive information. The advice is still under consideration and the Government's conclusions will be made known in due course.

Drink-driving

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the total number of persons convicted at the Corby magistrates court of offences of driving whilst under the influence of drink, excess alcohol, refusal to provide a specimen for analysis and being drunk in charge for each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: At Corby magistrates court there were, in 1987 and 1988 respectively, 160 and 227 findings of guilt for offences of driving, etc. after consuming alcohol or drugs. Information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost; the figure for 1989 is not yet available.

Traffic Lights

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that the Metropolitan police have sufficient manpower resources to deal with traffic problems and dangers arising from the failure of traffic lights at major junctions in Greater London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is for the Commissioner to decide whether it is necessary to deploy officers or other staff where traffic lights fail. This is an operational matter which he will determine against the background of other priorities and the manpower available to him.

Empty Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of properties owned by his Department and suitable for residential accommodation has been empty for *(a)* up to a year and *(b)* over a year; and where these properties are located, by region or local authority area.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office owns quarters available for members of the prison service. The Department is in the process of selling surplus prison service quarters, and in the last two years more than 3,600 properties have been sold, including 260 vacant quarters. Precise information about empty quarters still owned by the Department is not available on a regional basis, but a broad estimate is that 15 per cent. of the 400 quarters now owned by the prison department have been vacant for more than one year.

The following information is available about accommodation owned by the Property Services Agency but managed by the Home Office. Four properties in East Anglia managed by the directorate of telecommunications have been vacant for less than a year. One property at the emergency planning college in north Yorkshire has been vacant for over a year. The fire service college in Gloucestershire has four properties which became vacant only recently. These will be reoccupied shortly.

Criminal Records Office

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for individuals' criminal records are received by the criminal records office daily.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the national identification bureau, which is responsible for the maintenance of the national collection of criminal records, receives an average of 6,840 requests for individuals' criminal records each working day.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed in the criminal records office; what are the numbers in each grade; and how many vacancies currently exist at each grade.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that on 31 January 1990 the complement, staff in post and vacancy figures for the national identification bureau, which is responsible for the maintenance of the national collection of criminal records, were :

Rank	*Complement*	*Staff in post*	*Vacancies*
Police Officers			
Commander	1	1	0
Detective Chief Superintendent	1	1	0
Detective Superintendent	2	3	(−1)
Detective Chief Inspector	3	2	1
Detective Inspector	8	8	0
Detective Sergeant	20	16	4
Detective Constable	48	39	9
Total	83	70	13
Civil Staff			
Grade 7	1	1	0
Principal Fingerprint Officer	2	2	0
Senior Fingerprint Officer	9	9	0
Fingerprint Officer Grade 1	33	30	3
Fingerprint Officer Grades 2/3	133	127	6
Senior Executive Officer	1	1	0
Higher Executive Officer	4	4	0
Executive Officer	36	25	11
Administrative Officer	227	229	(−2)
Administrative Assistant	74	66½	7½
Typist	4	2	2
Support Manager 3	1	1	0
Support Grade Band 1	15	14	1
Support Grade Band 2	69	66	3
Total	609	577½	31½

The staff complement of the bureau is under review, following a joint Metropolitan police/Home Office staff inspection carried out in 1989.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the principal users of the criminal records office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The following are the principal organisations entitled to direct access to the information held in the national collection of criminal records maintained by the national identification bureau:

United Kingdom Police Forces;
Foreign Police Forces through Interpol;
Government Departments and Agencies;
Members of the public exercising their rights of subject access under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information technology is in use at the criminal records office; if there are any proposals to expand it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the national identification bureau, which is responsible for the maintenance of the national criminal record collection, uses the following information technology systems:

Microfiched Library Records;
An Image Retrieval System for fingerprints;
The Police National Computer, in particular the Index of Criminal Names and Convictions file;
Fax/Message Switching/Integrated telephone communications systems.

Proposals are under consideration to extend the use of information technology within the bureau to include:

A fully computerised national criminal record system linked directly to police forces, the crown prosecution service and other parts of the criminal justice system;
Computerisation of the property and method indices;
Office automation;
Automatic fingerprint recognition.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average delay between a request for a full criminal record being received by the criminal records office and its receipt by the body which made the request.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the average time taken for the national identification bureau to reply to requests for information, from receipt of the request to dispatch from the bureau, varies according to the type of request received. The most common requests and response times are as follows:

Confirmation of identity of arrestees—6 working days;
Copy of microfiche record—2 working days;
Telephone request for urgent responses—30 minutes;
Government searches—no trace—2 working days;
Government searches—trace—5 working days;
Bulk list searches—3 working days.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces are principally dependent upon the national criminal records office; and which make use of regional or force records offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All police forces in the United Kingdom make use of the national collection of criminal records held by the national identification bureau (NIB). The following forces have no additional criminal record facilities available to them:

Bedford
City of London
Cumbria
Dorset
Durham
Dyfed Powys
Gloucestershire
Gwent
Hertfordshire
Kent
North Wales
North Yorkshire
Surrey
Warwickshire
Wiltshire

Scottish forces have access also to the Scottish criminal record office. Other forces in England and Wales hold their own collections of criminal records which may, in part, duplicate the information held by the NIB.

Lorry Inspections

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training police officers receive for lorry weight and tachograph inspections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Training for police officers in these inspections, as in other aspects of road traffic enforcement, is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

Pop Concerts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have *(a)* died and *(b)* been injured at pop concerts in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available since injuries and deaths are not coded to show type of event, such as pop concerts.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Meteorological and Climate Research

3. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision exists for postgraduate training in meteorological and climate research.

Mr. Jackson: The Natural Environment and the Science and Engineering Research Councils are funding a total of 74 studentships for postgraduate study in meteorology and climate research in the 1989-90 academic year. In addition, the Meteorological Office provides training for its new graduate scientific staff, which enables them to proceed to posts in climate research.

Financial Management (Schools)

13. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the introduction of local financial management in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Sixty-one authorities have received formal approval for their schemes and a further 30 are being consulted on modifications prior to approval. We have indicated to six authorities that their schemes cannot be approved in their present form.

Special Educational Needs

14. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the level of resources available for pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The appropriate level of resources for pupils with special educational needs will be considered, alongside all other sectors of education, in determining the local authority grant settlement for 1991-92. At local level it is for individual LEAs to decide, within the statutory framework, what resources to allocate for such pupils from the total funds available to them.

99. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that the content of educational statements for children with special needs is determined only by the needs of the handicapped pupils.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Guidance on the procedures for assessments and the preparation of statements of special educational needs was issued to local education authorities on 29 September 1989 in circular 22/89.

LEAs (Administration Costs)

15. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what savings have been achieved in respect of central administration costs of local education authorities as more responsibilities have been devolved to local schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: We expect LEAs to secure the largest economies they can as schemes are implemented. This will allow as much money as possible to be delegated.

Standard Spending Assessments

16. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the 1990-91 standard spending assessments for education.

Mr. MacGregor: Since the announcement of the local authority settlement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 11 January, my Department has received direct representations about standard spending assessments for education from a small number of local education authorities.

92. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to discuss the 1990-91 standard spending assessments for education with the Association of County Councils.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the Association of County Councils to discuss the 1990-91 standard spending assessments for education.

72. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the standard spending assessments for education in 1990-91.

Mrs. Rumbold: The standard spending assessments for education will replace the education grant-related expenditure assessments on 1 April 1990 as the education component of the assessment by which revenue support grant is distributed. The methodology for determining education standard spending assessments was decided after extensive consultation with the local authority associations.

ERASMUS Project

17. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of Government expenditure on the ERASMUS project; and what estimate he has made of this budget for the coming year.

35. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of Government expenditure on the ERASMUS project; and what estimate he has made for the budget for the coming year.

62. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of Government expenditure on the ERASMUS project; and what estimate he has made for this budget for the coming year.

Mr. Jackson: With the exception of the administrative costs of the national grant-awarding agencies, ERASMUS is funded from the Community budget. Provision in 1990 has been set at 60 million ecu. Provision in 1991 will be determined during the Community budget negotiations later this year but has been provisionally estimated by the Commission at 64 million ecu.

Drug Misuse

18. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet local education authority drug misuse co-ordinators; and what he will discuss with them.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I will be meeting the national liaison group of the drug education co-ordinators on Monday 12 March. The agenda for the meeting has yet to be determined.

81. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he plans to take to consider the problem of drug abuse in schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department is providing grant on expenditure of up to £4·1 million by local education authorities in 1989-90 to encourage and support the development of programmes of drugs education in schools, colleges and the youth service. In 1990-91 grant will be paid on expenditure of up to £7 million on programmes of preventive health education, including education about drug misuse. The national curriculum science order requires that pupils in both primary and secondary schools should study the risks of drug misuse and how it affects body processes. In addition, the National Curriculum Council plans to issue guidance in the spring to all schools in England on the place and content of health education, including education about drug misuse, in the curriculum as a whole.

School Repairs

19. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of outstanding repairs for schools in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

50. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of outstanding repairs for schools in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The 1987 report of the DES survey of school buildings estimated that the cost of implementing the main structural requirements related to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 and the other physical requirements in primary and secondary schools in England was about £1·1 billion (although this estimate is subject to sampling error). This figure includes improvements to buildings as well as repairs. Since the survey substantial sums, both capital and current, have been, and continue to be, devoted to improving school premises. The repair of schools in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Nursery Education

20. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to meet representatives of those local education authorities that make little provision for nursery education.

44. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to meet representatives of those local education authorities that make little provision for nursery education.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. My right hon. Friend believes that local authorities themselves are best placed to determine the extent and form of provision for the under-fives in their area.

86. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nursery and under-five-year-old public education places have been created since 1979; and which are the local authorities which have reached the higher proportion of places created during such period.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the number of places available in England is not collected centrally. The number of children under five attending maintained nursery and primary schools increased by 119,000 between 1979 and 1989. The 10 local education authorities with the largest share of that increase are:

	Number
Avon	7,254
Birmingham	6,113
Inner London	5,429
Derbyshire	4,845
Cheshire	4,673
Dorset	3,310
Leeds	3,155
Leicestershire	3,136
Lancashire	3,128
Northamptonshire	3,110

43. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to extend the provision of nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

82. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to extend the provision of nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The local authority grant settlement for 1990-91 allows for local authorities to spend almost £15 billion (£14,988 million) on education. This total allows for the continuance of the steady growth in the proportion of under-fives participating in education, as well as for the growth in the under-five population. The actual deployment of education funding will continue to be for authorities and schools to determine.

Out-of-Borough Pupils

21. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the number of out-of-borough pupils being educated in Barnet in January.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information for January 1990 is not yet available. However, in January 1989 there were 4,747 pupils from outside the borough in Barnet schools.

National Curriculum.

22. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any new proposals on the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government intend to continue to implement the national curriculum on the broad timetable announced. My right hon. Friend will continue to make new proposals as appropriate.

31. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to help ensure the effective implementation of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is making specific grants available to support the implementation of the national curriculum. Education support grants and LEA training grants will support over £100 million relevant expenditure by local education authorities this financial year and some £120 million next. These are in addition to general rate (or revenue) support grant funding.

My right hon. Friend is also grant-aiding the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council, which are providing advice and training materials.

Rural Primary Schools

23. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy in relation to the provision of rural primary schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for LEAs to decide on the pattern of provision of rural primary schools. Any proposals for closure of such schools must take account of considerations such as denominational choice, local geography, the distance to be travelled to alternative schools, and the age of the children making those journeys. My right hon. Friend is currently supporting through education support grants a number of pilot projects at primary schools in rural areas, including Cumbria, which are designed to experiment with ways of enriching the curriculum.

Teachers' Pay

24. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to dissolve the interim advisory committee which reports on teachers' pay and conditions.

Mrs. Rumbold: The committee discharged its remit to report on teachers' pay and conditions in 1990-91 on 30 January.

59. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress towards setting up new collective bargaining arrangements for teachers.

87. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made to establish a new negotiating machinery for the pay and conditions of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

60. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report by the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

77. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning the need to improve the pay and conditions of school teachers.

98. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report by the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend wrote to the teacher unions, the local authority employers and others on 7 February inviting their comments on the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions and on his proposals for their implementation. He asked for comments by 1 March.

33. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement on the implementation of the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions.

51. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken in response to the report made to him by the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions; and whether he intends to introduce more flexibility into the structure of teachers' pay.

67. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on teachers' pay for the next financial year.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 1 February, *Official Report*, columns *287-89*.

Student Loans

25. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average debt expected for a student studying for a four-year science degree at a Scottish university, assuming the student loans scheme were in operation and the student entered the first year of the course in autumn 1990.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 30 January (*Official Report*, column *158*).

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received to date about the proposed student loans scheme.

Mr Jackson: Since the publication of the White Paper on top-up loans for students, we have received about 5,300 letters, including 72 petitions. Of those, about 940 have been received since publication of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

88. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the functions and the running of the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Jackson: The Student Loans Company is a company limited by shares and owned by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Scotland. It is based in Glasgow and is undertaking preparatory work on the student loans scheme. It is the Government's intention that, subject to the passage of the Education (Student Loans) Bill, the company will administer the scheme.

90. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how parental contributions to student maintenance will change once the student loans scheme is fully implemented.

Mr. Jackson: The average contribution will fall to a little over half its current level. This was shown in tabular form in the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 21 December 1989 at columns *356-57*.

61. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of students who will apply for top-up loans in the forthcoming academic session; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Top-up loans will mean extra resources for students. If 80 per cent. of those eligible were to apply, some 455,000 students would receive loans in the 1990-1991 academic year.

58. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the location of the student loans administration headquarters.

Mr. Jackson: We have received no written representations on the location of the Student Loans Company. My right hon. Friend announced on 22 January that the company had secured premises in Glasgow (*Official Report*, column *496*).

40. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the managing director of the Student Loans Company; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend expects to meet Mr. Ronald J. Harrison, managing director of the Student Loans Company, from time to time to discuss preparatory work on the student loans scheme. Officials of the Department of Education and Science and the Scottish Education Department are in regular contact with Mr. Harrison.

Education Reform Act

26. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to amend the charging regulations issued under the Education Reform Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to amend the charging regulations issued under the Education Reform Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Before considering whether amendment is necessary, my right hon. Friend has instructed the Department to commission a survey of schools in the summer term to monitor any changes in the pattern of school activities since 1988. If there is evidence that activities are not taking place as a result of the legislation, my right hon. Friend will see how best he can help schools. He has no plans at present to amend the law.

53. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the implementation of the Education Reform Act in Northumberland.

Mrs. Rumbold: I believe that good progress is being made in Northumberland in implementing our reforms in both schools and further education colleges.

Page Report

27. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Page report.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel).

Vocational Education

28. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the introduction of the national curriculum will allow time for some pupils to undertake vocational education.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that there will be flexibility in the 14-16 curriculum, including scope for study towards vocational qualifications. He has asked the School Examinations and Assessment Council to advise him on the principles which might govern the submission by vocational examining bodies of qualifications for certifying parts of the national curriculum.

Derbyshire

29. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the standards of schooling in Derbyshire.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Her Majesty's inspectorate considers that there is much good teaching in Derbyshire but some weaknesses are also evident.

The national curriculum will enhance educational opportunity for all children in Derbyshire as elsewhere.

Incentive Allowances

30. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers are now eligible for incentive allowances; and whether he intends to increase the number of allowances available.

Mrs. Rumbold: An incentive allowance can be awarded to any qualified teacher paid on the main scale. My right hon. Friend has announced that he proposes to accept the recommendation of the interim advisory committee that the number of incentive allowances in primary and secondary schools should be increased to 189,000 from 1 September.

Religious Studies

32. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that secondary school pupils are provided with the opportunity of passing GCSE and A-level courses in religious studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A range of syllabuses in religious studies is available to schools at both GCSE and A-level. It is for schools to decide what courses to offer their pupils, but I would urge schools to give pupils who wish to do so the opportunity of taking religious studies at GCSE and at A-level.

69. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to improve the quality of instruction in the Christian religion in primary and secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education Reform Act secures the place of Christianity in the religious education and collective worship provided by county schools. The Government are supporting expenditure of £53·2 million by LEAs in 1990-91 on in-service training for the basic curriculum—which includes religious education—and collective worship.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools

34. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement setting out the Government's response to the problems referred to in the recent report of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

86. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to take any policy initiative following the publication of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools annual report; and if he will make a statement.

85. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking in response to the annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools.

91. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to take any

policy initiative following the publication of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The senior chief inspector's report is a survey of the state of the education service in 1988-89. It has many positive things to say, including that the great majority of work seen was satisfactory or better, and that good progress is being made in implementing the education reforms. The Government are already acting to tackle many of the weaknesses revealed, in particular to raise standards of achievement and reduce teacher shortages. My right hon. Friend will, of course, take account of the report's findings in the future development of the Government's education policies; and he looks to the other partners in the education service to consider the messages addressed to them.

39. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to discuss with parents' organisations the contents of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools annual report; and if he will make a statement.

74. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to discuss with parents' organisations the contents of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has not received any request from parents' organisations for a discussion about the senior chief inspector's annual report. He hopes that parents will note the positive things the report has to say about the state of the education service, and welcome the fact that many of the weaknesses revealed are already being addressed through the Government's wide-ranging programme of reforms.

GCSE

36. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the Government's proposals to change the structure of the GCSE examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: GCSE will continue to be the main form of assessment for pupils at age 16 but some changes will be necessary to bring it into line with the national curriculum. From 1994, achievement will be reported on the national curriculum 1-10 scale, pupils being awarded a GCSE certificate if they achieve level 4 or better. GCSEs will be available in single subjects and also in combinations of subjects. The School Examinations and Assessment Council is developing revised GCSE national criteria embodying the statutory attainment targets and programmes of study for the 10 foundation subjects of the national curriculum.

Secondary Schools, Essex

37. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what applications he has received for the reorganisation of secondary schools in Essex.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has recently approved proposals to reorganise secondary and further education in the Basildon and Wickford area. There are no other secondary reorganisation proposals concerning Essex currently awaiting his decision.

Capital Allocation, Bradford

38. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the capital allocation for education in Bradford.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 20 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *254-58*. It is for Bradford LEA to decide how to use the resources made available to it in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Supply Teachers

41. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the total cost of supply teachers in England and Wales for 1988-89.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Expenditure on supply teachers is not separately identified within the spending returns which local education authorities in England make to the Department of the Environment. Supply teachers in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pupil to Teacher Ratio

42. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest available figure for the pupil to teacher ratio in England and Wales; and what were the comparable figures for five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In January 1989 the overall pupil-teacher ratio in England was 17·0. Comparable figures for 1984 and 1979 were 17·9 and 18·9 respectively.

Corresponding figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Wandsworth

45. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the number of letters that his Department has received from parents in the London borough of Wandsworth in support of the policies being outlined by the present council once education is transferred from the Inner London education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: None. I have noted with interest what appear to be wide-ranging and imaginative plans approved by Wandsworth council to provide an education service which raises standards and which fully meets the needs and aspirations of local people. The implementation of most of these plans appears to be solely a matter for the council. However, to the extent that the plans require the publication of statutory proposals and approval by the Secretary of State, they will be considered strictly on their merits at the appropriate time.

Research Contracts

46. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice his Department has issued to universities with regard to research contracts with private companies.

Mr. Jackson: The Department continues to encourage universities to increase earnings from private sources, but has offered no specific advice.

Trained Teachers

48. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to help improve the supply of trained teachers.

105. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the measures which he is taking to deal with the problem of teacher shortages.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 8 January 1990 (*Official Report*, column 339). Since then we have announced that the Government are providing funding of £159,000 for the London Teacher Recruitment Campaign, and the Teaching as a Career Unit will be supporting the London boroughs. We shall continue to pursue our programme to recruit teachers in shortage subjects.

102. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce the numbers of students entering teacher training colleges at the start of the 1989-90 academic year; and if he will give comparable figures for the previous year.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr Evans) on 30 January 1990 (*Official Report*, column *161*).

Scientific Research

49. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has met representatives of British Scientists Abroad to discuss investment in scientific research.

Mr. Jackson: No, but I have met a number of British scientists abroad.

52. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had from British scientists abroad about their reasons for leaving Britain.

71. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from British scientists working abroad about the level of funding of research in Britain.

75. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from British scientists working abroad about the need for Britain to invest in scientific research.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not received any direct representations.

Science Teaching

54. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much the number of graduates applying to train to teach science has increased for 1990 over 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Applications from graduates for postgraduate certificate in education courses are handled by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry. For the week ending 9 February applications to train to teach science were 8 per cent. down on the corresponding time last year. Applications can be received up until the end of September. In January 1989 PGCE applications overall were running 6 per cent. down on the previous year, but at the end of the recruiting season applications were 2 per cent. and recruitment 4 per cent. higher than in the previous year. We are continuing to pursue our programme to recruit teachers in shortage subjects.

Biology Teaching

55. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much the number of graduates applying to train to teach biology has increased for 1990 over 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Applications from graduates for postgraduate certificate in education courses are handled by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry. For the week ending 9 February applications to train to teach biology were 17 per cent. down on the corresponding time last year. Applications can be received up until the end of September. In January 1989 PGCE applications overall were running 6 per cent. down on the previous year, but at the end of the recruiting season applications were 2 per cent. and recruitment 4 per cent. higher than in the previous year. We are continuing to pursue our programme to recruit teachers in shortage subjects.

British Veterinary Association

56. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the president of the British Veterinary Association to discuss matters within his responsibilities; and what was discussed.

79. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to discuss matters within his responsibilities; and what was discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has had no such meetings.

Teachers' Morale

57. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he plans to meet representatives of the teachers' unions to discuss morale in schools; and if he will make a statement.

89. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to improve morale among the teaching profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee foresees substantial gains in the self-confidence of teachers as the Government's education reforms are successfully introduced. The recommendations of the committee should significantly increase the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. My right hon. Friend will shortly be meeting the teacher unions to discuss the committee's report.

Technology Transfer

63. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made to develop links between institutes of higher education and industry for the purpose of technology transfer.

Mr. Jackson: This Government attach considerable importance to technology transfer between higher education and industry, both sectorally and geographically, whether on a regional, national or international basis. We are supporting a number of schemes for this purpose. For instance, the Department, together with others, is sponsoring the LINK initiative to develop and accelerate the commercial exploitation of Government-funded research in a range of sectors; a national network of regional technology centres to support technology transfer locally, and the European Community COMETT programme to support it internationally.

Mathematics Teaching

64. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much the number of graduates applying to train to teach mathematics has increased for 1990 over 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Applications from graduates for postgraduate certificate in education courses are handled by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry. For the week ending 9 February applications to train to teach mathematics were 9 per cent. down on the corresponding time last year. Applications can be received up until the end of September. In January 1989 PGCE applications overall were running 6 per cent. down on the previous year, but at the end of the recruiting season applications were 2 per cent. and recruitment 4 per cent. higher than in the previous year. We are continuing to pursue our programme to recruit teachers in shortage subjects.

Records of Achievement

65. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in response to his draft regulations and circular encouraging schools to adopt records of achievement schemes.

Mrs. Rumbold: Fifteen responses have been received, but the period for public consultation does not end until 31 March.

Curriculum Returns

66. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take in respect of the requirement on schools to complete the annual curriculum returns.

Mr. MacGregor: My proposals will be published within the next few days.

Staying-on Rate

68. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the expected staying-on rate in full-time education for the 16 to 18 years age group in the years 1992-93.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 22 February (*Official Report*, column *843*).

City Technology Colleges

70. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he anticipates that he will reach the target of 20 operational city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twenty CTCs remain the target. The programme is making excellent progress. Three colleges have already opened, and 10 more will open in September 1990 or 1991. Target dates for the remainder depend upon practical considerations such as site acquisitions.

83. Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many companies have agreed to sponsor city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: Over 160 companies and individuals are sponsoring the CTC initiative. Discussions are still continuing with other companies.

National Testing

73. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the relationship between national testing and secondary selection.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no formal relationship. The basis for secondary selection, where it exists, is for local discretion.

Teacher Shortages

76. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will produce figures for teacher shortages for each of the past five years; and what further steps he plans to take to reduce such shortages in the future.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Vacancies for teachers in England and the proportion of teachers in service that they represent are as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Secondary vacancies					
Number	1,897	2,398	2,508	1,989	2,424
Proportion	0·9	1·1	1·2	1·0	1·3
Primary vacancies					
Number	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,400	3,116
Proportion	n/a	n/a	n/a	1·5	1·8

Data for primary schools are collected for the first time in 1988. Data for 1990 are currently being collected.

The Government have implemented a range of measures to combat teacher shortages including: publicity

and advertising campaigns spearheaded by the Teaching as a Career Unit; the £1,300 bursary for trainee teachers of shortage subjects; and in-service training for existing teachers of shortage subjects. Over two years from April we shall be supporting expenditure of £4 million in 45 local education authorities to improve the recruitment of mature new entrants and returners. We shall continue and reinforce our range of measures.

101. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest estimates of teacher shortages within and without London; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave on 21 December 1989 to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) at columns 353-55.

We shall continue to support and develop the range of measures we have taken since 1986 to improve teacher supply. These include new initial and in-service training courses; the establishment of the Teaching as a Career Unit (TASC) to undertake national advertising and publicity; taster courses for mature people considering a career change; education support grant provision for local initiatives to attract mature entrants and former serving teachers; the licensed and articled teachers schemes; and bursaries for initial teacher training students on shortage subject courses.

In addition we are supporting a London-wide recruitment campaign with funding of £159,000 in 1989-90.

Primary and Infant Schools, Manchester

78. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what correspondence he has received from head teachers of primary and infant schools in Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not available in the form requested. My right hon. Friend frequently receives correspondence from head teachers about various aspects of education provision.

Physics Teaching

80. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how many the number of graduates applying to train to teach physics has increased for 1990 over 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Applications from graduates for postgraduate certificate in education courses are handled by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry. For the week ending 9 February applications to train to teach physics were 17 per cent. down on the corresponding time last year. Applications can be received up until the end of September. In January 1989 PGCE applications overall were running 6 per cent. down on the previous year, but at the end of the recruiting season applications were 2 per cent. and recruitment 4 per cent. higher than in the previous year. We shall continue to pursue our programme to recruit teachers in shortage subjects.

Sport

84. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement about the promotion of sport in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey).

Bradford LEA

93. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning Bradford education authority's guidelines on restrictions on head teachers from communicating with the media.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None.

Teachers' Status

94. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to improve the status of the teaching profession.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 February that he proposed to accept in full the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions. These will mean better matching of rewards with contribution, better career prospects for good teachers and greater competitiveness for the teaching profession in the graduate labour market.

School Sports Facilities

95. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any further plans to encourage the use of school sports facilities by voluntary organisations when not in use by the school concerned.

Mr. Alan Howarth: With my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport, I intend to issue a document giving practical guidance on the dual use of school sports facilities. Publication is due in early April 1990.

Local Management of Schools

96. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about local management of schools. Many of these expressed heartening support for the key principles of local management of schools and looked forward to its successful introduction in April.

Teachers (Resettlement)

97. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the resettlement arrangements for teachers in schools which close because they are surplus to requirements.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Resettlement arrangements for teachers whose schools close are a matter for their employers.

Higher Education

100. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications there have been for courses of higher education in the forthcoming

academic year; how many people are presently in higher education; and what were the numbers in higher education (*a*) five years ago and (*b*) 10 years ago.

Mr. Jackson: By 15 December 1989, the Universities Central Council on Admissions and the Polytechnics Central Admissions System had received 195,000 and 152,000 applications respectively from home and overseas students for admission to higher education courses in 1990. There are an estimated 1,061,000 students on higher education courses in institutions in Great Britain in the current academic year, compared with 882,000 in 1984-85 and 778,000 in 1979-80.

Grant-maintained Schools

103. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the number of schools which have now been accorded grant-maintained status and on the number of schools which have commenced the process of application for this status.

Mrs. Rumbold: To date 86 schools have embarked on the process of applying for grant-maintained status. Of these 80 schools have held ballots, and parents at 60 of them have so far voted in favour of proceeding with an application. My right hon. Friend has approved or said he is minded to approve 35 of the 46 proposals which have so far reached him for decision. More secondary schools have now been approved for grant-maintained status than the number of secondary schools in over half of English LEAs.

Student Grants

104. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice or guidelines he has issued to local education authorities concerning the level of student grants for 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: Following my right hon. Friend's announcement in December, the Department sent a circular letter in January informing local education authorities of the proposed main rates of grant and parental contribution scales for mandatory awards in 1990-91. A further circular letter about supplementary grant rates and any amendments to the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations proposed for 1990-91 will be issued by the summer. The regulations themselves will be laid before Parliament in the summer and made available to local education authorities.

Disabled Children

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what actions he plans to take on the failure of Gloucestershire education authority to ensure that Beverley Lewes received an education after the age of 10 years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is currently investigating the circumstances of the case with the Gloucestershire local education authority.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to ensure that all deaf-blind children up to the age of 16 years receive full-time education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department published a statement on the educational needs of deaf-blind children on 9 March 1989, which describes the provision currently available for these children and suggests how it might be developed. We will be following up this document later in the year, to see what progress has been made by authorities towards providing for the needs of deaf-blind children.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to identify young disabled adults who have not received the education to which they are entitled; and what steps he intends to take to redress the situation.

Mr. Jackson: As part of their general duty to provide adequate facilities for further education for their area, local education authorities are required to have regard to the requirements of persons with learning difficulties. I see no reason to remove from LEAs the primary responsibility for identifying needs or to alter the existing machinery for complaints about provision in individual cases.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any circumstances under which a local education authority is not regarded by his Department as being obliged to provide full-time education to a disabled child under the age of 16 years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Where a child has a statement of special educational needs, a local education authority is obliged, under section 7(2) of the Education Act 1981, to arrange that the special educational provision specified in the statement is made for him unless his parents have made suitable alternative arrangements for his education.

Leukaemia Research

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total cost of the recent Medical Research Council case control study of leukaemia and lymphoma in young people resident in west Cumbria; and what percentage of it was met by each Government Department involved.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council has informed me that the total cost of its case control study of leukaemia and lymphoma in young people resident in west Cumbria was £260,000. The Department of Health contributed 27 per cent. of the total cost.

Examinations

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to introduce measures to sustain the consistency of examination standards.

Mrs. Rumbold: The School Examinations and Assessment Council already works with examining bodies, through formal scrutinies, conferences of chief examiners, and other means, to secure the greatest possible consistency in standards of awarding grades. My right hon. Friend has no plans to promote additional action to that end.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much would (*a*) the share, (*b*) the number of units and (*c*) the cash allocation received by the

Housing Corporation regions covering London as part of the 1990-91 approved development programme have been increased had the revised housing needs index been fully implemented next year.

Mr. Chope: The tables compare the actual distribution of the for rent and for sale elements of the approved development programme in 1990-91 with that suggested by the housing needs index for the geographical area covered by the corporation's three London and home counties regional offices:

(a) Share of HNI

	Column 1 Per cent. of HNI	*Column 2 Per cent. of actual ADP distribution*	*Column 3 Column 2 as per cent. of Column 1*
For Rent	37·35	33·46	89·59
For Sale	37·35	33·46	89·59
Total	37·35	33·46	89·59

(b) Planned number of units to be approved (excluding Special Homelessness Programme and central Corporation reserve)

	HNI suggested distribution	*Units Actual ADP distribution*	*Column 2 as per cent. of Column 1*
For Rent	7,190	6,441	89·59
For Sale	1,494	1,338	89·56
Total	8,684	7,779	89·58

(c) Share of ADP cash allocation (excluding Special Homelessness Programme and central Corporation reserve)

	£ millions (total scheme costs ie public and private investment) HNI suggested distribution (cost compensated)	*Actual ADP distribution*	*Column 2 as per cent. of Column 1*
For Rent	490·6	439·6	89·59
For Sale	107·7	96·8	89·88
Total	598·3	536·4	89·65

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Community Charge

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with the local authority associations and the national builders federation the position of small building companies that have built housing estates for sale but not yet found purchasers for those houses and that are being charged twice the standard community charge on each empty house.

Mr. David Hunt: Newly built domestic property is entitled to complete relief from the standard charge for at least six months after it has been substantially completed. Local authorities have discretion to extend that period for such property for as long as they wish; they also have discretion to levy a charge which is less than twice the personal charge. These decisions are for individual local authorities to take and justify in the light of local circumstances, and it would not be appropriate for the Government to seek to influence those decisions.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have now set their community charge levels, to the latest convenient date; what level of charge has been set in each case; and what is the political control of each authority concerned.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 21 February. (*Official Report*, Vol. 167, column *741*).

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken by his Department to collate publicly available information on community charge registrations by hon. Members; how much of this information was collected; and for what purposes it was collected.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The Department has collected no such information.

Community Charge (North Bedfordshire)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will cap the community charge for North Bedfordshire which has substantially exceeded the figure recommended by the Government.

Mr. Chope: Selection of authorities for capping has to be on general principles and it would not be right for me to speculate on whether North Bedfordshire borough council or any other authority would be capped if my right hon. Friend needed to use his capping powers for next year; but he has made it clear that if authorities insist on budgeting excessively he will not hesitate to cap them.

Council Houses, Lambeth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were conveyed for sale in Lambeth in 1988; how many were exempt from stamp duty because they were disposed of for less than £30,000; and what was the ratio of the capital value to the rateable value.

Mr. Chope: Lambeth borough council reported the sale of 537 dwellings in 1988-89; information is not collected centrally on the value of individual sales or on their rateable value.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to table 15.3 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989," whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing in the same form the number and value of (i) houses and (ii) flats owned by Lambeth borough council and conveyed to the private sector in 1988.

Mr. Chope: Lambeth borough council reported the sale of 302 houses and 235 flats in 1988-89 at a total value including discount of £26,559,000. The number of sales includes 20 dwellings sold to housing associations. Information is not collected centrally on the value of house and flat sales.

Tenants' Choice

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authority areas in which tenants' choice has been exercised; and how many properties have been involved in each case.

Mr. Chope: At present, one tenants' choice application has been served, on Westminster city council. This application is for 1,100 properties. Many other tenants' groups and potential new landlords are in preliminary discussions with the Housing Corporation.

Cyclists

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has done concerning the effect of greater numbers of cyclists on *(a)* vehicle pollution of the environment and *(b)* global warming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 26 February (*Official Report*, Vol. 168, column *55*).

Structural Defects (Compensation)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money his Department has awarded in compensation to property owners claiming for structural defects resulting from high alumina cement who were *(a)* private owners and *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* housing associations.

Mr. Chope: None.

Council House Sales

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sales of council houses quarter by quarter up to and including the last quarter of 1989 since 1985.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is listed in the table:

English local authority and new town sales[1]

Year	*Q1*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
1985	25,981	21,550	21,711	20,359
1986	20,979	19,684	20,979	23,380
1987	23,944	21,575	23,221	27,382
1988	34,472	32,607	35,202	39,363
1989	40,933	37,290	[3]33,856	[3]33,000

[1] Includes sales to owner-occupiers only.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Estimated.

Cheshire Council (Staffing)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1979 the *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* total staffing levels of Cheshire county council, Macclesfield borough council and Vale Royal borough council.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Cheshire county council: staffing levels at June

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1979	23,242	18,076	41,318
1980	22,849	17,400	40,249
1981	22,322	16,065	38,387
1982	21,682	16,053	37,735
1983	21,463	15,252	36,715
1984	20,754	16,988	37,742
1985	20,579	17,282	37,861
1986	20,729	18,362	39,091
1987	20,959	20,090	41,049
1988	20,892	19,536	40,428
1989	20,780	19,024	39,804

Macclesfield borough council: staffing levels at June

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1979	970	158	1,128
1980	899	146	1,045
1981	879	152	1,031
1982	896	178	1,074
1983	865	176	1,041
1984	844	194	1,038
1985	837	187	1,024
1986	826	202	1,028
1987	836	201	1,037
1988	826	223	1,049
1989	816	194	1,010

Vale Royal borough council: staffing levels at June

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1979	870	132	1,002
1980	906	127	1,033
1981	875	124	999
1982	850	132	982
1983	844	135	979
1984	829	128	957
1985	830	103	933
1986	812	106	918
1987	804	104	908
1988	769	107	876
1989	786	122	908

Shire Counties (Spending)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all shire counties in rank order of spending per head for *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90, so far as possible and *(c)* 1990-91, based on any available spending proposals.

Mr. Chope: The information for 1988-89 and 1989-90 is in the tables. Corresponding information for 1990-91 is not yet available.

The spending per head of population given in the tables has been calculated using Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population.

Net current expenditure per head of population—Shire counties 1988-89

	Rank	*£*
Shire Counties England		
Cleveland	1	596
Humberside	2	542
Derbyshire	3	526
Cumbria	4	517
Nottinghamshire	5	510
Lancashire	6	505
Durham	7	495
Leicestershire	7	495
Bedfordshire	9	492
Northamptonshire	10	485
Cheshire	11	483
Hertfordshire	11	483
Buckinghamshire	13	480
Shropshire	14	475
Warwickshire	14	475
Avon	16	471
Essex	17	457

	Rank	£
Gloucestershire	18	455
Somerset	18	455
Northumberland	20	451
Staffordshire	21	449
Wiltshire	22	448
Lincolnshire	23	446
Cambridgeshire	24	443
Cornwall	25	442
Berkshire	26	440
North Yorkshire	27	437
Hampshire	28	435
Kent	28	435
Isle of Wight	30	432
Hereford and Worcester	31	431
Devon	32	427
Norfolk	33	420
Surrey	34	419
Suffolk	35	417
Oxfordshire	36	408
Dorset	37	402
East Sussex	38	398
West Sussex	39	393

Net current expenditure per head of population—Shire counties 1989-90

	Rank	£
Shire Counties England		
Cleveland	1	622
Humberside	2	563
Derbyshire	3	544
Nottinghamshire	4	536
Lancashire	5	535
Cumbria	6	529
Durham	7	525
Leicestershire	8	520
Northamptonshire	9	516
Cheshire	10	512
Bedfordshire	11	511
Avon	12	509
Somerset	13	508
Hertfordshire	14	506
Buckinghamshire	15	502
Shropshire	15	502
Warwickshire	17	499
Wiltshire	18	488
Essex	19	486
Northumberland	20	483
Staffordshire	21	478
Cambridgeshire	22	477
Gloucestershire	22	477
Cornwall	24	476
Lincolnshire	25	475
Devon	26	473
North Yorkshire	26	473
Hereford and Worcester	28	455
Berkshire	29	454
Oxfordshire	29	454
Kent	31	453
Norfolk	32	451
Hampshire	33	450
Isle of Wight	34	442
Surrey	35	439
Suffolk	36	438
Dorset	37	427
East Sussex	38	420
West Sussex	39	416

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the basis of his calculation of a net inflow of persons for Grimsby and an average of night stayed by visitors for indicator values for standard spending assessment purposes.

Mr. Chope: A definition of these and all indicators used within SSAs is given in annex A of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) approved by the House on 18 January.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he intends to make provision for concessions on community charges to those households which are not connected to the main sewer and which at present receive a reduction in their rating assessment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to make provision for some adjustment to those people who pay community charges and do not receive certain services because they live on an unmade road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* No. The community charge is not property-based, and it would not be appropriate to retain features of the rating system which link payment for local services to the rental value of property.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his written reply dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region, and so on, (1) whether he will provide in each case the average amount per head contributed by central Government to the finance of local expenditure in 1989-90;

(2) whether he will provide in each case the adult population figures on which it was based together with the number of hereditaments: and if he will add figures for the child population.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* I have today placed in the Library a table showing the information requested. The figures for 1989-90 rate support grant include contributions to or from the London rate equalisation scheme and are per head of relevant population in 1990-91. Central Government also contribute towards the finance of local authority expenditure by specific grants but amounts are not yet known for individual authorities or areas.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his written reply dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region, and so on, whether he will provide in each case an estimate of the numbers of single-adult households chargeable to poll tax together with the number of those with children.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The available information is shown in the table. This is based on data taken from the family expenditure survey and shows the estimated number of single-adult households with and without children in each region.

	Single adult	*Single parent*	*All single households*
Northern	460	40	500
Yorkshire and Humberside	670	80	750
North West	800	110	910
East Midlands	440	40	490
West Midlands	580	70	650
East Anglia	230	20	250
Greater London	950	90	1,040
Remainder of South East	1,140	120	1,260

	Single adult	Single parent	All single households
South West	500	50	550
Total England	5,770	620	6,400

Numbers are in thousands and may not add due to rounding.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the assumptions and the basis of calculation used in his reply to the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 12 February, *Official Report*, column *58*, that under the community charge system about 15 times as much will be contributed to the cost of local government by the top 10 per cent. of households by income compared with the poorest 10 per cent.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* Using a sample of households grouped into deciles of gross income, the calculations involved the following stages:

(i) Calculate the amount of local spending funded by national taxation as a multiple of income from domestic rates (less rebates).

(ii) Taking the figure produced by (i), calculate the amount of national taxation accounted for by centrally funded contributions to local taxation.

(iii) Calculate the amount produced by (ii) as a proportion of total national taxation.

(iv) Assuming that the proportion at (iii) applied equally to all households, estimate the amount of national taxation paid as a contribution to local authority spending by the top and bottom deciles of households by income.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings his Department has had with, and how many letters it has received from, Derbyshire county council in connection with the community charge within the past year.

Mr. Chope: The Department has had no meetings with, but has received nine letters from, Derbyshire county council in connection with the community charge within the past year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his written reply dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region, what assumption has been made about the per adult contribution made by central Government in deciding the proposed increase in the local tax/ratepayer's contribution to local expenditure in Humberside; and whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the per adult figures for the central Government contribution in each case, together with figures showing that contribution as a percentage of the local tax/ratepayer's contribution.

Mr. Chope: The Government have not proposed a specific increase in local contribution to expenditure in Humberside. The Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) sets out the basis of distribution of revenue support grant for 1990-91. The Revenue Support Grant Transition Report (England) sets out the adjustments to that basis of distribution and the Special Grant Report specifies two special grants for 1990-91. The distribution of business rates will be in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The table shows the aggregate of these amounts (known as "external support") for Humberside authorities as amounts per adult and as percentages of the average assumed personal community charge or 1989-90 rate bill per adult:

External support for Humberside

	External support per adult £	External support as percentage of rate/chargepayer contribution
Underlying 1990-91 assumed community charge with safety net	595	224·4
Underlying 1989-90 average rate bill per adult	583	241·0
Underlying assumed long run community charge	535	164·9

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has commissioned any research on the effects of the poll tax or community charge on the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Chope: No such research has been commissioned. Any person solely or mainly resident in a building, whatever its use, will be subject to the personal community charge. Bed-and-breakfast accommodation offered in someone's own home which is available for fewer than 100 days in a year will not be subject to business rates.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of the block grant given to each London borough, per head of population in 1988-89, 1989-90 and the forecast for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: The information for 1988-89 and 1989-90 is as follows. Comparable information for 1990-91 is not available for individual authorities because of changes to the grant system.

Block grant per head of population—London boroughs

	1988-89 (£)	1989-90 (£)
City of London	0	0
Camden	0	0
Greenwich	207	223
Hackney	364	421
Hammersmith and Fulham	316	345
Islington	281	302
Kensington and Chelsea	232	283
Lambeth	346	377
Lewisham	277	308
Southwark	293	347
Tower Hamlets	361	457
Wandsworth	265	264
Westminster	0	0
Barking and Dagenham	190	213
Barnet	118	100
Bexley	233	235
Brent	270	320
Bromley	176	159
Croydon	137	135
Ealing	224	228
Enfield	189	183
Haringey	413	441
Harrow	198	203
Havering	190	190
Hillingdon	18	11
Hounslow	104	83
Kingston upon Thames	129	115
Merton	209	207
Newham	464	521
Redbridge	233	240
Richmond upon Thames	66	38
Sutton	157	154
Waltham Forest	364	370

Note:

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population have been used to derive per capita values.

Shropshire County Council

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total number of employees of Shropshire county council for each of the past five years.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Shropshire County Council: Staffing levels at June (excluding Police[1])

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1985	7,200	6,833	14,033
1986	7,190	7,185	14,375
1987	7,215	7,677	14,892
1988	7,336	7,438	14,774
1989	7,506	7,719	15,225

[1] Police functions are carried out by the West Mercia Police Authority.

Environmental Protection

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions have been taken by the Council of Ministers on the 1989-92 STEP framework programme initiative on environmental protection and the 1989-92 EPOCH framework programme on climatology and natural hazards.

Mr. Trippier: The Council of Ministers adopted the STEP (science and technology for environmental protection) and EPOCH (European programme on climatology and natural hazards) on 20 November 1989. The programmes will run for four years from the date of adoption at a cost of 75 million European currency units (mecu) and 40 mecu, respectively.

Empty Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the number of empty residential properties in the private sector; and what is his estimate of the percentage that this represents of the total number of residential properties in the private sector;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of properties which are empty in each of the categories of *(a)* local authority housing, *(b)* housing association housing and *(c)* Government Department housing; and what is his estimate of the percentage that this represents of the total number of properties in each such group;

(3) what is his estimate of the number of vacant assured tenancies in the private sector *(a)* now, *(b)* in February 1989 and *(c)* in February 1988;

(4) what is his estimate of the number of vacant tenancies in the private sector by region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The available information for April 1989 is in the table. Figures are for England, except in the case of Government Departments, which cover Great Britain.

	Vacant dwellings (thousands)	*As a percentage of stock*
[1] Local authority	100·7	2·4
[2] Housing association	21·8	4·2
[3] Other public sector	35·1	18·1
[4] Private	589·0	4·1

[1] Derived from local authorities housing investment programme returns for April 1989. Includes dwellings which are closed or have been acquired for demolition, and dwellings on overspill estates.

[2] Derived from housing association returns to the Housing Corporation for March 1989. Includes 13,500 dwellings, mainly purchased vacant from the private sector, which require rehabilitation work before suitable for occupation.

[3] 1988-89 figures reported by central Government Departments to the Treasury and includes dwellings owned by local health authorities. Many are vacant because of operational requirements, notably those owned by the Ministry of Defence, and others have been acquired for demolition eg by the Department of Transport. The Government are encouraging the sale of housing which is surplus to requirements and many of those that are vacant are in the process of disposal.

[4] Includes both rented and owner occupied dwellings. Local authorities provide figures in their housing investment programme returns, but because of the difficulty of obtaining up-to-date information on private sector vacancies, the estimates are likely to be less reliable than other information provided. The Department has no estimates of the number of vacant tenancies in the private sector or of vacant assured tenancies in the private sector. For information about Wales and Scotland I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any plans to introduce grants for housing associations and local authorities to bring unoccupied houses into use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* Housing association grant and housing revenue account subsidy to local housing authorities are already available for a variety of activities which may bring unoccupied houses into use. Allocations of capital resources to associations and authorities also take account of the need for this work. The primary aim of the £250 million homelessness initiative announced last November was to bring empty housing association and local authority dwellings back into use.

Air Pollution

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made by his Department of the number of deaths and the number of work days lost through air pollution for each year since 1980, together with the estimated cost of health care.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has made no such estimate. The term "air pollution" is not sufficiently precise to be attributable as a cause of death or illness, and it is therefore doubtful whether the information exists on which such estimates could be based.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what have been the annual changes in the emissions of sulphur dioxide from fossil fuel combustion in the United Kingdom from 1975 to 1989; and if he will give the projections for the years to 1995;

(2) what have been the total annual reductions in the emissions of sulphur dioxide in the United Kingdom from 1975 to 1989; and if he will give the projections for the years to 1995;

(3) what projections he has concerning the emissions of nitrous oxides from the United Kingdom; and what plans he has for their reduction.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for the years 1975 to 1987 are given in chapter 2 of the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", copies of which are held

in the Library of the House. Figures for 1988 will be contained in the 12th edition, which will be published shortly. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

The European Community large combustion plants directive commits us to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide from existing combustion plants over 50 MW by 60 per cent. by 2003, and of nitrogen oxides by 30 per cent. by 1998, based on 1980 levels in each case, with stringent emissions standards for new plants. The agreement on motor vehicles reached with our European partners in June 1989 is expected to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides by about 80 per cent. from each new car after 1992. We are in the process of examining the implications of these commitments with Warren Spring laboratory, which maintains the national emissions inventory for the Department.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the impact of the uniform business rate and the non-domestic revaluation on properties in the rural development areas *(a)* overall and *(b)* by type of property.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not readily available. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Local Government, Essex

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of the expenditure of Chelmsford borough council and Essex county council in each year since 1983-84 in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms; and *(c)* cash terms per head of population; and if he will indicate the percentage increase in each year;

(2) if he will publish details of the direct total grants made to Chelmsford borough council and Essex county council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population in every year since 1983-84.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Net Current Expenditure

	Cash Terms £ million	Percentage change	Constant Price terms 1989-90 prices £ million[1]	Percentage change	Cash terms Per head[2] £
Chelmsford BC					
1983-84	3·205		4·428		22
1984-85	3·266	1·9	4·299	−2·9	22
1985-86	4·241	29·9	5·298	23·2	29
1986-87	4·243	0·0	5·128	−3·2	28
1987-88	5·621	32·5	6·451	25·8	37
1988-89	5·699	1·4	6·098	−5·5	38
1989-90[3]	7·972	39·9	7·972	30·7	53
Essex CC					
1983-84	464·619		641·964		311
1984-85	491·856	5·9	647·430	0·9	329
1985-86	521·132	6·0	650·998	0·6	346
1986-87	577·315	10·8	697·685	7·2	382
1987-88	641·207	11·1	735·849	5·5	421
1988-89	698·902	9·0	747·825	1·6	457
1989-90[3]	743·491	6·4	743·491	−0·6	486

[1] Using GDP Deflator to convert cash values to constant prices.
[2] Using Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population to calculate per capita values.
[3] Budget estimates.

Direct revenue grants[1]

	Cash terms £ million	Constant price terms—1989-90 prices[2] £ million	Cash terms per head of population[3] £
Chelmsford BC			
1983-84	2·002	2·766	14
1984-85	1·835	2·415	13
1985-86	1·492	1·864	10
1986-87	3·771	4·557	25
1987-88	1·846	2·118	12
1988-89	1·057	1·131	7
1989-90	1·050	1·050	7
Essex CC			
1983-84	185·786	256·701	125
1984-85	190·339	250·543	127
1985-86	167·120	208·766	111
1986-87	162·469	196·344	107
1987-88	167·537	192·265	110
1988-89	152·197	162·851	99
1989-90	130·358	130·358	85

[1] Comprising Block Grant and Specific and Supplementary grants.
[2] Using GDP Deflator to convert cash values to constant prices.
[3] Using Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population to calculate per capita values.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the figures for the total number of staff, both full time and part time, employed by Essex county council and Chelmsford borough council in each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Staffing Levels at June

Year	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Essex County Council			
1983	27,508	23,966	51,474
1984	27,362	24,811	52,173
1985	27,437	25,472	52,909
1986	27,410	27,229	54,639
1987	27,690	28,060	55,750
1988	27,927	29,411	57,338
1989	27,805	29,861	57,666

Year	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Chelmsford Borough Council			
1983	743	125	868
1984	745	121	866
1985	752	124	876
1986	783	106	889
1987	814	95	909
1988	843	95	938
1989	884	146	1,030

Satellite Dishes

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he has given to extending the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 to require planning consent for the installation of any satellite antennae on the front elevations of properties;

(2) what consideration he is giving to extending the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 to include controls over the erection of satellite antennae on dwellinghouses or within their curtilage within conservation areas.

Mr. Moynihan: These issues will be included in the consultation paper which we shall shortly be issuing about planning controls on satellite antennae and other telecommunications development.

Local Government (Politically Restricted Posts)

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet prepared the regulations under section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department has today sent copies of draft regulations to the local authority associations and others for comment. I have arranged for a copy of the draft to be placed in the Library of the House.

The regulations will complete the provisions to ensure that local government officers who hold politically sensitive posts are subject to restrictions to ensure that they do not undertake public political activity which are broadly comparable to those to which senior civil servants have been subject for over a century.

The Act already provides that from 1 May 1990 such local government officers will be disqualified from election as Members of the European Parliament, Members of Parliament and members of county, district and London borough councils. The regulations, when made, would ensure that a comparable range of restrictions apply to other forms of public political activity.

In general, the regulations follow the proposals in the Government's consultation paper, but changes have been made which will permit local authority officers to hold offices in political parties which are concerned solely with the internal management of the party (for example, as auditors), and which will make it clear that the restrictions do not apply in any way to the officers' official duties.

The draft regulations provide that the restrictions would apply, like the disqualifications, from 1 May 1990.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his replies to the hon. Member for Bradford, West of 19 February relating to the Caravan Sites Act 1968, if he will list the poor-performing local authorities to which he has written since issuing a directive to Hertfordshire county council.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to Avon, Hereford and Worcester and Surrey county councils.

Gipsies

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what numbers of gipsies residing in, or resorting to *(a)* Hertfordshire and *(b)* Surrey have been recorded in each of the last 10 years; and what provision each authority has made, to date, over the last 10 years.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* According to local authority returns to the Department's biannual counts exercise (begun in 1980), the following numbers of gipsy caravans have been recorded in these two counties:

Hertfordshire gipsy caravans

	Unauthorised	Authorised (local authority)	Private (authorised)	Total
January 1980	112	129	12	253
July 1980	119	128	14	261
January 1981	107	139	14	260
July 1981	131	121	15	267
January 1982	105	122	17	244
July 1982	87	131	17	235
January 1983	107	133	12	252
July 1983	123	134	11	268
January 1984	129	142	16	287
July 1984	126	129	16	271
January 1985	128	148	17	293
July 1985	149	137	18	304
January 1986	125	172	28	325
July 1986	106	161	19	286
January 1987	104	186	31	321
July 1987	115	164	24	303
January 1988	93	190	35	318
July 1988	130	183	27	340
January 1989	89	197	41	327
July 1989	78	203	37	318

Surrey gipsy caravans

	Unauthorised	*Authorised (local authority)*	*Private (authorised)*	*Total*
January 1980	179	146	83	408
July 1980	152	150	64	366
January 1981	207	155	77	439
July 1981	149	160	62	371
January 1982	154	175	98	427
July 1982	202	188	60	450
January 1983	169	207	76	452
July 1983	144	191	76	411
January 1984	161	217	102	480
July 1984	137	208	75	420
January 1985	138	197	97	432
July 1985	142	190	76	408
January 1986	162	224	89	475
July 1986	204	195	77	476
January 1987	146	256	85	487
July 1987	201	237	89	527
January 1988	191	276	94	561
July 1988	236	252	89	577
January 1989	166	265	99	530
July 1989	203	253	91	547

Hertfordshire has provided accommodation for 203 gipsy caravans on 148 pitches on nine local authority sites; of which 48 pitches on four sites have been provided since 1980.

Surrey has provided accommodation for 253 gipsy caravans on 204 pitches on 15 local authority sites; of which 100 pitches on eight sites have been provided since 1980.

The Department does not maintain records on private sites in these areas, the extent of which provision is revealed by the Department's biannual count returns.

House of Commons (Repairs)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the cash limit on minor repairs at the House of Commons in 1989-90 includes repairs at Norman Shaw, North and Norman Shaw, South.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* As I told the hon. Member in response to his question of 19 February (column *482*) minor repairs to the Parliamentary Estate are charged to class XX, vote 18, which is cash limited. The Norman Shaw buildings form part of the Parliamentary Estate.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of the annual numbers of complaint referrals made to local authority executive officers by mobile home owners concerning *(a)* alleged criminal acts and *(b)* alleged harassment by site operators since the implementation of the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The information is not held centrally.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the workings of the Mobile Homes Act 1983; and whether he is considering any revisions to the Act as a result of these submissions.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The Department has received various letters from hon. Members and the public about the operation of the 1983 Act, and is currently carrying out research into the mobile homes sector. We have no plans to amend the legislation.

Beach Pollution (Sussex)

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the private notice question from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 22 February, what steps he will take to ensure that no charge capping will be applied to any authority incurring extra costs of tackling recent serious pollution on Sussex beaches, if those costs lead to higher than planned community charge.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will not hesitate to cap authorities which insist on spending excessively. It would not be right for me to speculate on how any capping scheme might operate if my right hon. Friend needed to use his capping powers next year.

Toxic Material (Labelling)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what safeguards there are to ensure containers of toxic material are properly marked so as to prevent the type of accident that happened at TNT Northampton on 16 February;

(2) what sanctions there are against consignees, hauliers and recipients of inadequately labelled toxic substances.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

Correct labelling is a requirement of the Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984. Those who breach the regulations are liable to prosecution and may be fined up to £2,000 by a magistrates court or an unlimited fine by a Crown court.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 28 February 1990

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Power Stations, Calais

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there is any monitoring by Her Majesty's Government of nuclear emissions from power stations at Calais.

Mr. Trippier: No. Emission monitoring is undertaken by the power station operating authorities in the country concerned. Her Majesty's Government would be informed under international agreements of any release of radioactive material that could be of radiological significance for the United Kingdom. The national radiation monitoring network, Rimnet will detect any abnormal levels of radiation in the United Kingdom.

Radiation (Cornwall)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of properties surveyed by the National Radiological Protection Board in each Cornwall district is over the newly declared safety level; and whether the owners of those properties have been informed of the new safety advice.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The percentage of private and council houses surveyed by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) in each Cornwall district with radon concentrations above the new action level are as follows:

	Percentage
Caradon	27
Carrick	23
Kerrier	45
North Cornwall	34
Penwith	42
Restormel	27

The NRPB is writing to all householders whose survey revealed concentrations of between 200 and 400 bq m^{-3} to inform them of the change in the action level.

Watercourses (North West)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many watercourses in the North West water authority area are classified under *(a)* class 1b and *(b)* class 2 categories; and whether there are any plans to alter the classification procedure in the future.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The 1985 river quality survey indicated that, of the 5,900 km of rivers and canals surveyed in the North West water authority area, 2,710 kms were in class 1a, 762 kms in class 1b, and 1,239 kms in class 2. The existing classification schemes for rivers, canals and estuaries are being reviewed in conjunction with the work of developing the system of statutory quality objectives provided for in the Water Act 1989, and proposals will be published in due course.

Public Land (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which sites in the Bolton area are included in the Goverment's register of under-used publicly owned land; and what is their individual acreage.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department's register has now been superseded for most purposes by individual public sector owners' registers which have been available to the public since 31 October 1989 under codes of practice issued last August. Copies of relevant extracts are available at district council offices

I have, however, arranged for a list of sites in the Bolton area on the Department's register as at 30 September 1989 to be placed in the Library.

Hazardous Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) of 8 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *423*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information contained in his letter of reply of 5 December 1989.

Mr. Trippier: My letter of 5 December 1989 to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) contained the following information in reply to questions he had tabled on aspects of hazardous waste management.

I said that there were four incinerators licensed to deal commercially with special wastes in Britain. I had no detailed information on the number of large chemical incinerators in the European Community or elsewhere which treated special wastes. I was unable to provide the information the hon. Member sought on the design of the furnace doors of the incinerators.

Regarding incineration at sea, the disposal of wastes was licensed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. My Department did not keep records of the amount of special wastes incinerated in the North sea or in other European waters.

This Department had held information on the import of wastes for incineration only since October 1988 when the relevant provisions of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations came into force. Since then some 8,700 tonnes of imported special waste had been dealt with at the four commercially available incinerators.

Information on the amount of waste dealt with at the incinerator operated by ReChem International Ltd. at Ponteg, Pontypool was not held by this Department but by the local waste disposal authority, Torfaen borough council. The results of the PCB sampling in soils and herbage around the plant undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution were (figures in micrograms per kilogram):

PCBs in Herbage:
Range 3·0-19·7
Mean 8·4
Median 6·6

PCBs in Soil:
Range 9·0-19·0
Mean 13·5
Median 14·8

The latest figures (August 1989) indicated levels of PCB in the flue gas of the incinerator to be considerably less than 0·01 mg/cum. The (then) latest figures for Dioxin and Furans (in nanograms per cubic metre) were:

	Number
2, 3, 7, 8—tetrachlorodibenzofuran	0·050
Tetrachlorodibenzofurans (total)	0·120
2, 3, 7, 8—tetrachlorodibenzodioxin	<0·025
Tetrachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	<0·025
Pentachlorodibenzofurans (total)	<0·025
Pentachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	<0·025
Hexachlorodibenzofurans (total)	<0·025
Hexachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	<0·025
Heptachlorodibenzofurans (total)	<0·050
Heptachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	0·050
Octachlorodibenzofuran	<0·025
Octachlorodibenzodioxin	0·050

The emission figures for both PCBs and dioxins/furans compared very favourably with those published for similar incinerators in Europe.

No equipment was available to give instantaneous readings of PCB or dioxin in flue gas. However, continuous sampling was undertaken and samples of flue gas were analysed on a routine basis for PCB and on a more random basis for dioxin.

A number of possible processes were under investigation as alternative methods of incineration of PCBs. The most promising appeared to be those involving exchange of the chlorine atom or microbiological systems. Neither would be likely to prove effective for high concentrations of PCBs, for which high-temperature incineration was likely to remain the only satisfactory form of disposal.

From the start of commercial production of PCBs in 1929 to 1980 some 1,055,000 tonnes of PCBs had been produced worldwide, of which 66,800 tonnes were produced in the United Kingdom by Monsanto, Newport. Other major producing countries were the United States of America (648,000 tonnes), Japan (60,000 tonnes), Spain (25,000 tonnes) and (Italy (24,000 tonnes). During 1980-84, only France, West Germany, Italy and Spain within the Community continued to manufacture PCBs and after 1984 production continued only in France and Spain. This Department did not hold figures for PCB production after 1980.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen asked about the amount of special wastes which had been subjected to the Leigh environmental sealosafe solidification process. This Department does not hold information on that which is a matter for the waste disposal authority, Walsall metropolitan borough council. Finally, the hon. Member asked about the import of flyash through Swansea docks. That, again, is a matter for the local waste disposal authority, Swansea district council.

Empty Council Houses, Stockport

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of empty council houses in Stockport at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The latest available information was provided by Stockport metropolitan borough council in its April 1989 housing investment programme return (HIP1), a copy of which is in the Library.

Jet-Skiing

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to give local authorities powers to control jet-skiing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Local authorities already have powers to make byelaws regulating the use of jet ski's under the various Public Health Acts and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Harbour authorities and the National Rivers Authority are similarly empowered.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications to dispose of radioactive waste have been refused on the ground that the volumes in question exceeded the quota set for applications by British Nuclear Fuels Limited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No application received by this Department has been refused on these grounds.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the locations of those sites where non-nuclear radioactive waste is disposed of, stating the percentage of the total non-nuclear radioactive waste generated which is disposed of at each site.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 February 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) at column *179*.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the volume of non-nuclear radioactive waste held in storage in *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1986, *(d)* 1987, *(e)* 1988 and *(f)* 1989; what projections exist for levels over the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested. Low-level radioactive waste arising from outside the nuclear industry is not normally stored, but is disposed of either locally or to the BNFL-operated disposal facility at Drigg (sometimes via the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) establishment at Harwell) under the terms of authorisations issued by HMIP under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Where appropriate, such authorisations may permit waste to be accumulated on site either to allow the radioactivity to decay before disposal or for other operational reasons. Such accumulations and disposals are subject to strict conditions and activity limits and, although information on volumes of waste etc. is not recorded centrally, operators are required to maintain proper and detailed records. These records, as well as the premises or sites concerned, are subject to scrutiny by HMIP inspectors. Where a suitable disposal route is not available, the radioactive waste may be stored at the UKAEA establishment at Harwell.

Apart from these local disposals and accumulations, the latest available information on stocks and future arisings of raw radioactive waste from minor waste producers is contained in the 1987 "United Kingdom Radioactive Waste Inventory," a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure public consultation in the site selection process for a single national repository for radioactive waste.

Mr. Trippier: UK Nirex Ltd's consultation document "The Way Forward" invited comments on Nirex's proposals for a deep repository for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste. Nirex took account of these comments before recommending that site investigations should be made at Sellafield and Dounreay. The Government have made it clear that a public inquiry will be held into Nirex's proposals for a substantive development.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what volume of non-nuclear radioactive waste was disposed of at landfill sites under the Radioactive Substances (Phosphatic Substances, Rare Earths, etc.) Exemption Order 1962 for each of the last five years; what projections exist for volumes to be disposed in this manner over the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The terms of the exemption order do not require such information to be kept either by the disposer or this Department.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the volume of non-nuclear radioactive waste accepted at Drigg for each of the last five years; and what percentage came from *(a)* hospitals, *(b)* research and development operations, *(c)* land decontamination and *(d)* other sources; what are the expected global levels in volume for the next three years, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Information on the volumes of wastes disposed of at the Drigg disposal site can be found in BNFL's annual reports entitled "Radioactive Discharges and Monitoring of the Environment", copies of which are in the Library of the House. A more detailed breakdown of the wastes originating from non-nuclear industries is not available.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the volume of non-nuclear radioactive waste disposed of otherwise than at Drigg for each of the last five years; and what percentage came from *(a)* hospitals, *(b)* research and development operations, *(c)* land decontamination and *(d)* other sources; what are the expected global levels in volume for the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: This Department does not maintain a central record of the volumes of low-level radioactive waste disposed of through local disposal routes or of specific disposal locations. However, a condition of authorisation requires waste producers to keep proper and detailed records relating to their disposals. These records, as well as the premises or sites concerned, are subject to scrutiny by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution inspectors and in cases where a disposal requires special precautions to be taken by a local or public authority, both Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution and local waste disposal authorities are notified by the operator of the nature and destination of individual consignments of radioactive waste due for disposal.

Water Leakage

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria the Director General of Water Services will employ to determine if the level of leakage from water distribution systems is excessive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Water undertakers are under a duty to maintain an efficient and economical system of water supply. It is for undertakers to determine what leakage control measures to take, based on their own cost-benefit analysis.

How the director general might decide to review this aspect of undertakers' performance is a matter for him.

Sellafield

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has in regard to the statement made to the European Parliament on 14 February by the President of the European Council, on behalf of the Council of Ministers, concerning Sellafield.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has noted the verbatim report of the proceedings of the European Parliament on 14 February.

North Sea Conference

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what participation his Department will have in the North sea conference in March.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will visit the Hague on 7 and 8 March to represent the United Kingdom at the third North sea conference.

Action for Cities

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in the first two years of the Government's action for cities initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is announcing today, two years after she launched the Government's action for cities initiative, that spending on the programmes which come within the initiative is to increase by £0·5 billion, from just under £3·5 billion this year to around £4 billion in 1990-91.

Also today, I am publishing a new report entitled "People in Cities" which highlights ways in which inner city residents are benefiting from the new opportunities being created in their areas and which emphasises the importance of the partnership and growing co-operation between business, central Government, local authorities, voluntary organisations and local people.

Other announcements being made include the approval of funding for a new spine road to open up the Bristol development corporation area, the setting up of two inner city task forces in the Wirral and in Derby and a large number of task force and city grant project approvals.

Today, the Prime Minister and all nine members of the special ministerial team appointed in December to spearhead action in the inner cities are visiting projects and reviewing progress in cities up and down the country.

I have sent copies of the "People in Cities" report to hon Members with constituencies in the inner city target areas. Copies of the report will also be placed in the Library and are available in the Vote Office.

Housing, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *758*, when he expects to announce a decision on applications submitted last October and November for city grant and estate action grant in respect of new homes to rent and for sale on the Lower Grange estate.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Member that I announced approval of a £5·38 million estate action contribution towards an £11·5 million scheme to improve over 300 local authority owned houses on the Lower Grange estate on 22 February and that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities has today announced approval of a £2·65 million city grant for the construction of 280 new homes and the refurbishment of 28 flats for sale.

Parliamentary Rifle Range

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who paid the cost of the newly completed refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster rifle range.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The cost of safety work carried out last year to allow members of the staff sports and social club to continue to use the range was borne on the parliamentary works subhead (class XX, vote 18).

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his estimate of what the rates levied in each local authority for 1990-91 would have been had rates continued will be based on a proportion of grant-related expenditure into 1990-91 or on standard spending assessments; and if he will publish a table estimating for each local authority the sums under each system, the gains and losses and the effect of these on the average rate bill and the poll tax demand.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* It is our intention when community charges are finally set to say what the increase would have been in domestic rates had that taken the place of the community charge.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of acres covered by each enterprise zone within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The area of each enterprise zone in the United Kingdom is given in the table.

Enterprise zone	*Acres*
1. Belfast	510
2. Clydebank	570
3. Corby	280
4. Delyn	293
5. Dudley	649
6. Glanford	124
7. Hartlepool	270
8. Inverclyde	[1]274
9. Invergordon	148
10. Isle of Dogs	[1]362
11. Londonderry	270
12. Lower Swansea Valley	775
13. Middlesbrough	190
14. Milford Haven Waterway	362
15. North East Lancashire	282
16. North West Kent	377
17. Rotherham	260
18. Salford-Trafford	870
19. Scunthorpe	260
20. Speke	340
21. Tayside	297
22. Telford	279
23. Tyneside	1,120
24. Wakefield	220
25. Wellingborough	136
26. Workington (Allerdale)	215

[1] Excluding water covered areas.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Speech Therapists

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the numbers of speech therapists employed by each local education authority in England *(a)* in total, *(b)* by category of employment and *(c)* as a figure per 100,000 of the population of the appropriate local education authority area, listing the local education authority areas in the last case in descending order;

(2) if he will take steps to increase the number of speech therapists who are employed within the education service.

Mr. Alan Howarth: District health authorities are responsible for the provision of speech therapy services to local education authorities. It is for local education authorities to decide whether in addition they make available any provision from their own resources. Information about the number of speech therapists employed by local education authorities is not available centrally.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make it his policy that any agreement under section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988 which has yet to be finalised will contain a provision specifying that, in the event of the agreement being terminated, for any reason, the city technology college or city college for the technology of the arts shall be treated as discontinued for the purposes of the agreement and section 105(5) of the Education Reform Act 1988; and if he will take steps to have such a provision included, by way of amendment, in any agreements already in effect;

(2) if he will take steps to prevent a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts from being converted into a fee-paying school other than by his consent, without there being a requirement that any capital funding previously provided under section 105 of the Education Reform Act should be repaid.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988 provides for my right hon. Friend to enter into an agreement with any person to establish and maintain a city technology college (CTC) or city college for the technology of the arts (CCTA). A copy of the model agreement for this purpose has been placed in the House of Commons Library. If this agreement were terminated, for example, because the college charged fees, the provisions of section 105(5) of the Education Reform Act would come into effect.

Storms

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking in view of the recent storms to ensure the safety of school pupils.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Our first concern has been to ensure that everything possible is done to avoid more deaths and injuries to pupils such as those which occurred in the recent storms. The standing instructions which local authorities issue to schools about handling emergencies, combined with the good sense of head teachers and their colleagues, played their part in helping to minimise casualties. But my Department is writing to LEAs asking them to review their instructions in the light of recent experience.

It is the responsibility of local education authorities to ensure the safety of their school buildings, but my Department has been working with the Department of the Environment and the Building Research Establishment to establish the causes of the roof failure at the Grange junior school in Swindon. As a result of that investigation the Department is today issuing guidance to all local education authorities, grant-maintained schools, independent schools, non-maintained special schools, CTCs and the PCFC and UFC about the characteristics of buildings with lightweight roofs which may be at risk, inspection procedures and possible remedial measures. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

The Government have already announced that the Bellwin scheme will operate with respect to damage sustained in the storms of a month ago. This assists LEAs following an emergency with the costs of immediate repairs to school buildings to ensure their continued operation and the safety of their occupants. In parallel, my Department has written to diocesan authorities and other promoters of voluntary aided schools setting out a simplified claims procedure for repairs required after storm damage and inviting bids.

Curriculum Returns

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take in respect of the requirements on schools to complete the annual curriculum returns.

Mr. MacGregor *[pursuant to his reply, 27 February 1990, c. 167]:* My proposals were published today. They simplify those provisions of the Education (Schools Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989 which cover the annual curriculum return. Copies of the proposals have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Child Abduction

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what research his Department has carried out, or is undertaking, regarding the problem of children abducted by one of their parents; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is no formal research programme, but the Lord Chancellor's Department is fully aware of the practical and legal difficulties that arise from the problem, and is able constantly to monitor developments through its role as a central authority under the Hague convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction and the European convention on the recognition and enforcement of decisions concerning custody of children and on restoration of custody of children. This brings the Department into contact with large numbers of victims of the problem. It also involves the Department in international discussions, the next of which will occur next week, which promote increased understanding of the problem.

THE ARTS

Export Licences

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what list he maintains of works of art for which Her Majesty's Government would not consider granting an export licence.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Lists have been suggested from time to time, but were never taken forward and form no part of the export procedures.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will draw up a list of works of art for which Her Majesty's Government would not consider granting an export licence which includes (*a*) sculptures, (*b*) drawings, (*c*) manuscripts and (*d*) contemporary works of art.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* I have no plans to draw up lists of works of art for which Her Majesty's Government would not consider granting an export licence.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Rented Sector

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1978 the weight of private sector and public sector rents in the cost of living index; whether those weights include rates when paid by the landlord; and what will be the effect of the index if the landlord does not reduce the rent to take account of the abolition of rates.

Mr. Lilley: The weight for local authority and private rents in the retail prices index, in parts per thousand, has been as follows:

	Weight
1978	32
1979	32
1980	28

	Weight
1981	30
1982	36
1983	36
1984	35
1985	31
1986	29
1987	34
1988	33
1989	32

The weight is adjusted to exclude domestic rates paid through landlords. The index will continue to reflect actual rents charged.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1978 the weight of *(a)* rates and *(b)* water and sewerage rates in the retail prices index together with the implied domestic rate contribution to local government expenditure.

Mr. Lilley: The weights in the retail prices index, to the nearest part per thousand, have been as follows:

	Domestic rate	Water and sewerage charges
1978	32	2
1979	28	6
1980	26	5
1981	28	8
1982	33	8
1983	35	9
1984	37	9
1985	36	9
1986	33	8
1987	42	7
1988	43	7
1989	42	7

The weights relate only to the households covered by the index and do not provide estimates of aggregate contributions to local government expenditure.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, for each of the years since 1973-74, the public sector borrowing requirement or the PSDR expressed in 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Ryder: Figures for the public sector borrowing requirement for 1973-74 onwards are given in the table expressed in cash terms and in 1989-90 prices.

Public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR)[1]

	Cash £ billion	1989-90 prices[2]
1973-74	4·3	21·9
1974-75	8·0	33·8
1975-76	10·3	34·4
1976-77	8·3	24·5
1977-78	5·4	14·0
1978-79	9·2	21·6
1979-80	9·9	20·0
1980-81	12·5	21·3
1981-82	8·6	13·4
1982-83	8·9	12·9
1983-84	9·7	13·4
1984-85	10·1	14·3
1985-86	5·6	7·1
1986-87	3·6	4·3
1987-88	−3·4	−3·9
1988-89	−14·5	−15·5

[1] A negative PSBR is a public sector debt repayment
[2] Cash figures converted to 1989-90 prices using the GDP deflator

Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of those schemes that meet the general conditions of approval of occupational and personal pensions by the Inland Revenue, are such as to permit payment of an amount related to a person's accrued or prospective retirement pension under the scheme, such payments to be made throughout any period in which that person is entitled to the payment of an invalidity pension from the national insurance fund and to cease at the end of that period.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will undertake to instruct the Inland Revenue to establish criteria for the approval of occupational and personal pensions schemes that provide payments of an amount related to a person's accrued or prospective retirement pension under the scheme, such payments to be made throughout any period in which that person is entitled to the payment of an invalidity pension from the national insurance fund and to cease at the end of that period.

Mr. Major: As I explained in reply to a question from the right hon. Member on 13 February, *Official Report*, column *128*, the main purpose of occupational pension schemes is to provide a pension in retirement. Occupational pension schemes are voluntary arrangements, and, subject to the conditions laid down to obtain exempt status, individual employers are free to determine the range of benefits that they wish to provide. It would not be appropriate to require them to provide benefits of a particular type or amount.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the site or sites for the proposed relocation of Customs and Excise headquarters work from London and the south-east have yet been decided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Having fully considered the work of an internal review team on potential relocation sites, together with the views expressed by staff and the departmental trade union side in a consultation exercise, the Paymaster General and the Board of Customs and Excise have decided that Liverpool and the Manchester area should receive the relocated posts. A synopsis report of the work of the internal review team will be placed in the Library.

Accordingly, over the next three to four years, some 1,250 VAT posts will be transferred to Liverpool from Southend whilst the Manchester area will receive about 430 posts from London. In addition, I expect these

changes to produce significant benefits both in terms of costs and staffing. Accommodation costs in particular will be reduced, and the opportunities for recruitment and retention of staff outside the problem area of the south-east will be substantially improved. At least 1,300 of these jobs will be available for filling locally which will give a boost to the economy of the north-west of England in accordance with the regional and inner city policies of Her Majesty's Government.

In addition, as part of the phased relocation exercise, a further 250 or so existing posts will be transferred from London to Southend to offset the 1,250 posts being moved to Liverpool.

Soviet Rouble

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, when he last met his Soviet counterpart, he discussed the status of the rouble; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 27 February 1990]* Since becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend has not met his Soviet counterpart. A new rouble exchange rate for tourism and business travel was announced in October 1989.

Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in current prices, *(b)* in 1988-89 prices and *(c)* in 1990-91 prices to those earning £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £25,000, £30,000, £40,000, £50,000, £60,000 and £70,000 as a result of changes in taxation and national insurance since 1979.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to his answer of 20 February 1990, Official Report, column 680]*: I regret that one of the two tables relating to my answer was omitted. This is as follows:

1989-90 Income Tax and NIC Liability Compared with 1978-79 Indexed Regions
Average Change Per Tax Unit Liable (+increase, −reduction) and Percentage Changes

Income	Income Tax		National Insurance Contributions		Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions	
	Average	Percentage change	Average	Percentage change	Average	Percentage change
£ per annum	£ per annum		£ per annum		£ per annum	
Under 5,000	−120	−39·9	−70	−31·4	−150	−36·9
5,000-10,000	−330	−28·6	+20	+4·6	−310	−21·4
10,000-15,000	−650	−28·5	+120	+19·2	−550	−19·4
15,000-20,000	−950	−27·7	+240	+30·2	−730	−17·5
20,000-25,000	−1,330	−27·7	+330	+37·6	−1,030	−18·3
25,000-30,000	−1,830	−28·2	+380	+42·0	−1,470	−20·0
30,000-40,000	−2,640	−27·9	+450	+45·6	−2,220	−21·4
40,000-50,000	−4,590	−30·4	+490	+49·1	−4,150	−25·9
50,000-60,000	−7,300	−34·0	+490	+48·3	−6,870	−30·6
60,000-70,000	−10,690	−37·4	+480	+48·4	−10,260	−34·8
Over 70,000	−32,630	−46·6	+470	+48·1	−32,220	−45·5
All	−1,080	−31·6	+150	+24·1	−930	−24·3
Total tax units liable (million)	22·6		19·5		23·3	
Total change (£ billion)	−24·5		+2·8		−21·7	

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the eight inspectors mentioned in his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 27 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *92*;

(2) if he will name the accountancy firms mentioned in his reply of 27 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *92*; and how much money has been paid to them by his Department.

Mr. Forth: Details are as follows:

Name of Inspector	Firm of Accountants
Mr. M. G. Lickiss	Grant Thornton
Mr. A. Ridler	Pannell Kerr Foster
Mr. H. G. C. Aldous	Robson Rhodes
Mr. D. L. Spence	Grant Thornton
Mr. M. D. Boohan	Grant Thornton
Mr. J. R. Venning	Robson Rhodes
Mr. J. C. Morton	Price Waterhouse
Mr. A. Sutton	Price Waterhouse

The total of moneys paid by my Department to the accountancy firms mentioned could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to legislate to ensure that the accountancy firms who act as auditors should derive more than 50 per cent. of their income from audits.

Mr. Forth: No.

Legal Advisers

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dover of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *391*, if he will name the legal advisers referred to; and if he will publish the text of their letter giving the assurances that certain activities had ceased.

Mr. Ridley: No. It is not my practice to reveal the contents of confidential correspondence.

Companies Act 1989

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further plans he has to commence the provisions of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: On Monday I signed two orders; one of which commences most of part I (company accounts) of the Act, and certain provisions of part V (appointment and removal of auditors, and written and elective resolutions, amongst others); the other commences most of part VIII (amendments of the Financial Services Act 1986) and transfers functions under the Financial Services Act to the Securities and Investments Board. The dates of commencement are 1 April 1990 for the relevant provisions of parts I and V, and 15 March 1990 for part VIII. The orders provide for various transitional and saving provisions; the provisions in part I relating to preparation and delivery of company accounts will apply only to accounts for financial years starting after 22 December 1989. I have placed copies of the orders in the Library.

Task Forces

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to make any changes to the location of inner city task forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government's inner city task forces have proved highly successful in creating jobs, encouraging training opportunities and stimulating enterprise in the country's most deprived areas. Today, I have published a report, "Task Forces In Action" which shows how task forces are helping to achieve the Government's aim of regenerating the inner cities. Since they began, task forces have committed some £49 million to over 1,700 projects to help the people of inner city communities.

The task force budget for 1990-91 will be £23·2 million, representing an increase of approximately 21 per cent. on this year's budget. I have today given approval for some 59 further task force projects involving funding of over £2 million.

Task forces have always been part of a rolling programme, tackling difficult areas and then moving on. I am delighted to be able to announce that I have decided to establish two new task forces: one in the Wirral, one in Derby.

I am also extending the existing task force, in north Kensington, into a part of the neighbouring borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. These task forces will work closely with the business community and with the local authority to improve the job and training opportunities for those in their area. They will all be starting their work as soon as possible.

The two new task forces, like the existing ones, are not intended to be permanent. One of their aims is to foster the development of local organisations which can capitalise on the task force work when the task forces themselves leave.

The task forces in Doncaster and Rochdale have now made significant progress in meeting those objectives, and I have consequently decided that they should close in the autumn. In the meantime, they will continue to build up the capacity of local bodies to take over their work in the future.

A number of important new projects by these task forces are among those I have announced today, and they will continue to welcome new proposals until the end of April 1990. Funding will also continue to be provided for a limited number of projects after the closure of the task forces.

I can also add that, over recent months, I have made 44 offers of regional selective assistance totalling over £17 million, which could create or safeguard over 3,200 jobs —most of them new ones—in inner city areas.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that any phasing-out of the multifibre arrangement is based on the principle of equal opportunities for all the producing nations.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* The EC is committed in GATT to phasing out the MFA after its expiry next year if a satisfactory overall deal can be reached which benefits the EC as a whole. The United Kingdom has made it clear that the MFA cannot be looked at in isolation and that among other things there must must be a greater commitment to market opening especially from newly industrialised economies. We are convinced that equal opportunities for all trading partners can best be achieved by the development of a more open, viable and durable trading system, pursued multilaterally under the aegis of GATT.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the cost to his Department of answering questions tabled by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) since 1 December 1989.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has tabled in excess of 160 questions to my Department since 1 December 1989. Detailed information about the cost of providing each answer is not recorded, but the total cost to the Department has probably been between £10,000 and £20,000.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ask the United Kingdom permanent representative in Brussels to seek clarification as to whether the guidance given by Sir Leon Brittan in his letter of 15 February to the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) represents the considered view of the European Commission.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Sir Leon Brittan makes clear in his letter of 15 February that the views expressed do not represent the definitive position of the Commission. That could only be given on the basis of a specific proposal put forward by Her Majesty's Government. The letter did, however, provide a sufficiently clear indication of the Commission's thinking alongside which we could judge our own consideration of the merits or otherwise of the proposals concerned. In particular, Sir Leon Brittan has made clear that were we to notify now proposals predicated on the resumption of

shipbuilding at NESL, that would cause the Commission to reconsider all aspects of the December 1988 notification, including its decision on the enterprise zone. The Government have always made it clear that that is not something we would be prepared to risk.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library any notes from officials arising from discussions between officials of his Department and officials of the European Commission concerning the future of NESL between 22 February 1988 and the present time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: No. Such notes are confidential. Contacts with the Commission on this matter were explained in a note placed in the Library on 24 July 1989 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton); in a letter I wrote to the Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee on 10 October 1989; in the evidence I gave to the Trade and Industry Committee on 18 October 1989; and in the statement I made to the House on 20 February 1990.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the specific reasons why the bid by Mr. Nat Puri to acquire NESL in 1988 was rejected.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: I refer to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) on 14 November 1988, *Official Report*, column 748.

Wood

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's trade deficit for wood and wood products during 1989; and what proportion of it was constituted by hardwood.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: The crude trade deficit in wood and wood products was £5,898 million in 1989; the proportion represented by hardwood was 5 per cent.

Moss Side and Hulme Task Force

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of spending undertaken by the Moss Side and Hulme task force since its inception including projects assisted, number of jobs created or estimated for each project, and cost per job.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: Since its launch in 1986, the Moss Side and Hulme task force has supported 96 projects with a total committed spend of around £3·5 million. The projects have also drawn in some £5 million other public spending and around £1 million from the private sector. Total jobs achieved to date are 524, together with 475 businesses supported and 1,942 training places provided. A cost per job figure is not available, mainly because project funding may be directed towards several objectives of which job provision is only one. I will write to the hon. Member with details of projects involving job creation.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if participation in employment training is a necessary condition for assistance by the Moss Side and Hulme task force; and if any reference is made to such conditions to applicants.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: No. However, projects that the task force considers for assistance must demonstrate clearly that they will offer economic benefits by way of employment or training opportunities for task force residents, and/or encouragement for local enterprise. Employment training is an obvious choice for projects involving training and is used wherever possible. All applicants are made aware of this.

PRIME MINISTER

Royal Society Lecture

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek to obtain a transcript of the lecture on the environment by Dr. Martin Holdgate given at the Royal Society on 26 February for her Office's library.

The Prime Minister: I have seen the transcript of the lecture by Dr. Holdgate and I understand my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be placing a copy in the House Library.

Community Charge

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister whether, in respect of England, any one Minister has the duty of recording, both individually and cumulatively, the additional costs falling to be paid by community charge resulting from obligations laid on local authorities pursuant to new Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and departmental circulars.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment monitors the costs of all central Government initiatives which are likely to have resource implications for local authorities. In assessing the level of total standard spending appropriate for a particular year, we take full account of new burdens on local authorities and the scope for savings.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Treaty of Rome (Revision)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what comment or dissent was offered by the United Kingdom to the decision of the European Community General Affairs Council of 5 February to ask Ireland formally to request the revision of the treaty of Rome and table framed treaty revision proposals; whether there will be an intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The President of the European Council at Strasbourg noted that the necessary majority existed to convene a conference charged with preparing an amendment of the treaty with a view to the final stages of EMU. The Foreign Affairs Council on 5 February considered the procedural technicalities required to give effect to the relevant conclusions of the Strasbourg European Council, in particular the requirement to obtain an opinion from the European Parliament.

We have made clear that, though we believe the convening of the intergovernmental conference was premature, we will nevertheless participate in it.

Agenda

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there has been any discussion between his Department and the Angolan Government concerning the latest outbreak of hostilities between the MPLA and UNITA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We have expressed our concern at the recent escalation in the fighting in Angola both to the Angolan Government and representatives of UNITA and have called on them to agree to an early ceasefire and negotiations for a political settlement. And on 19 February we joined with our European partners in issuing a statement calling for an end to the fighting and a ceasefire. A copy of the statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

Pamyat Group

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any information on the steps taken by the Soviet Government to control those activities of the Russian nationalist group Pamyat which are a threat to human rights.

Mr. Maude: There are encouraging signs that the Soviet authorities are prepared to take action when non-governmental organisations such as Pamyat are in breach of the law. On 15 February the Moscow city procuracy opened criminal proceedings against Pamyat under article 1 section 74 of the Russian criminal code which covers "deliberate actions aimed at causing national or racial emnity or discord".
On 21 February the Soviet Ministry of the Interior announced that it was investigating an incident at the central house of writers at which Pamyat allegedly broke up a meeting of reformists.

Anti-Semitism

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Soviet Government regarding recent anti-Jewish publicity; and whether he will seek an assurance that the Soviet authorities will discourage such outbursts.

Mr. Maude: We have made numerous representations to the Soviet authorities about the plight of Soviet Jewry. Incitement to racial hatred is illegal in the Soviet Union. It is encouraging that the extremist organisation Pamyat is currently being prosecuted under this law.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to meet representatives of the Government of Namibia after 21 March to ascertain if Namibia will sign and ratify the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Maude: It is our policy to take every suitable opportunity to raise non-proliferation issues, and the non-proliferation treaty in particular, with states that are not parties to the treaty.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the meeting of the European Foreign Affairs Council in Dublin on 20 February, the matter of encouragement to South Africa to join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was discussed.

Mr. Maude: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report, "New Concepts In Nuclear Arms Control: Verified Cutoff And Verified Disposal", by Warren H. Donnelly and Lawrence Scheinman, published in February by the Programme For Promoting Nuclear Non-Proliferation.

Mr. Maude: A copy of the report "New Concepts in Nuclear Arms Control: Verified Cut off and Verified Disposal" by Warren H. Donnelly and Lawrence Scheinman, published by the Programme for Promoting Nuclear Non-Proliferation, will be added to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office library in due course.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions the working group on nuclear non-proliferation of the European Political Co-operation Committee met in each year since 1985; which matters were discussed in each meeting; and how Her Majesty's Government were represented.

Mr. Maude: The working group on non-proliferation in European political co-operation has met four times in each year since 1985 to discuss matters relevant to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We are represented by appropriate officials.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), 15 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 839, what was the outcome of the meeting proposed with the European proliferation information centre, to which he makes reference.

Mr. Maude: A meeting with the European proliferation information centre has not taken place, but exchanges of correspondence with the centre about funding continue.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which organisations have received from his Department a grant in aid in 1989-90 to assist in the fostering of greater public understanding of nuclear non-proliferation issues and the role of the fourth review conference of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Maude: No organisation has received a grant in aid in the period 1989-90 for the purpose described in the question. Some funding has been made available to the programme for promoting nuclear non-proliferation (PPNN) for specific purposes.

Bananas

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what benefits are expected to accrue to African, Caribbean and Pacific and European Community banana producing countries as a result of the creation of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

The European Commission has not yet come forward with a proposal for the arrangements to apply for bananas post-1992, and it is not possible at present to say what impact the creation of the single European market will have on African, Caribbean and Pacific and European Community banana-producing countries. The Community has made it clear, however, that to safeguard the interests of these countries will be a major aim of any new arrangements.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are for the creation of a common import regime for bananas in the European Community in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply:

The European Commission is currently considering the possible arrangements for bananas post-1992 but has not yet come forward with proposals. We have encouraged the Commission and other member states to ensure that any new arrangements fulfil our commitments to our Commonwealth Caribbean suppliers and Lomé partners, and that they take account of consumer interests and of the competition and efficiency objectives of the single market initiative.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Alcohol

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of public funds have been made available since 1987 by *(a)* the Department of Health and Social Services and *(b)* the area health and social service boards to (i) the Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol, (ii) the Council on Alcohol Related Problems and (iii) the Northlands centre in Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol £	Council on alcohol related problems £	Northlands centre £
A. Funding from the Department of Health and Social Security			
1987-88	67,676	23,812	30,000
1988-89	76,721	28,960	50,750
1989-90	79,275	26,208	43,000
B. Funding from Health and Social Services Boards			
1987-88	18,264	—	45,000
1988-89	14,063	—	45,000
1989-90	18,000	—	45,000

Road Closure, Castlereagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates he took the decision to close Alanbrooke road, Castlereagh under the powers granted by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Mr. Cope: On 1 November 1989, I signed an order under section 19(2) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 on behalf of the Secretary of State, authorising Short Bros plc to close off Alanbrooke road for security reasons.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contributions his Department will make to the NATO exercises due to be held in Norway during March.

Mr. Cope: None.

Education (Maintenance Allowances)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claimants there have been for educational maintenance allowances in each education and library board in Northern Ireland for each of the last three years for which figures are available; and how many awards were made for each of these three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Board	1986-87		1987-88		1988-89	
	Applications	Awards	Applications	Awards	Applications	Awards
Belfast	327	230	316	109	203	67
Western	1,301	575	1,272	398	1,094	171
North-Eastern	442	179	307	93	213	65
South-Eastern	330	130	266	82	247	51
Southern	1,199	389	1,005	303	767	192

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects Lord Colville's report on the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts of 1978 and 1987 to be available.

Mr. Cope: Copies have now been placed in the Library and are available in the Vote Office.

Salmon

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the salmon rivers in the Foyle system and show in a table the number of salmon redds counted in each of those rivers in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: The information requested is as follows:

River	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Camowen	154	193	136	181	276
Culdaff	17	19	nil	25	23
Deele	66	73	32	64	87
Dennett	23	15	23	60	107
Derg	689	1,025	1,071	1,019	993
Drumragh	51	158	98	81	167
Faughan	203	411	188	329	659
Finn	394	807	375	518	651
Glenelly	46	380	nil	24	123
Mourne	4	nil	nil	nil	nil
Owenkillew	45	290	49	18	234
Reelan	240	367	110	321	387
Roe	718	768	891	729	1,282
Strule and Tribs	27	101	nil	8	32

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for Northern Ireland for each of the last five years the number of grilse and salmon taken in each river estuary by nets, the net catch by driftnetting, by coastal nets and by anglers and the sums raised in licence fees for nets and for fishing licences which allow salmon and grilse.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The information requested is listed in the table. The information relates to both the fisheries conservancy board and the Foyle fisheries commission areas and is based on returns of commercial catches of salmon and grilse made to the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and the Foyle fisheries commission and on returns of anglers' catches of salmon and grilse made to the Foyle fisheries commission.

	1984 Number	1985 Number	1986 Number	1987 Number	1988 Number
River Estuary Nets:					
River Foyle	10,560	14,174	12,438	5,298	16,121
River Roe	595	1,145	1,354	551	818
River Bann	—	—	—	—	—
Drift Nets	18,961	25,539	32,759	12,835	17,996
Coastal Nets	13,896	7,340	9,426	8,166	9,066
Anglers[1]	379	1,814	1,172	390	960
Licence Revenue	£	£	£	£	£
Commercial Salmon Licences	44,628	47,187	48,827	46,309	47,942
Game Angling Licences	138,111	156,629	178,563	194,848	216,842

[1] Foyle Area Only

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the salmon rivers in Northern Ireland, not in the Foyle system, and show in a table the number of salmon redds counted in each river in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Lough Erne rivers and tributaries:					
Colebrooke	15	27	4	21	48
Arney	17	20	n/c	21	18
Swanlinbar	4	5	n/c	4	13
Grarvary	3	6	13	2	7
Ardies	—	—	2	—	—
Drumnavanty	2	—	—	—	—
Kesh	9	14	n/c	2	5
Ballinamallard	17	37	n/c	—	24
Lough Melvin and tributaries:					
Total	—	7	n/c	16	52
Lough Neagh and Tributaries:					
Lower Bann	—	67	21	—	629
Moyola	—	—	11	n/c	112
Maine	—	—	n/c	21	11
Upper Bann	5	4	n/c	23	5
Blackwater	206	71	59	19	20
Sixmilewater	8	27	n/c	5	3
Ballinderry	—	—	19	12	20
Coastal Rivers and Tributaries:					
Fane	n/c	n/c	—	42	19

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Creggan	n/c	n/c	—	12	92
Clanrye	—	—	—	—	—
Cassywater	n/c	—	—	—	8
Whitewater	23	77	59	87	91
Kilkeel	3	11	9	12	16
Annalong	n/c	n/c	13	6	8
Shimna	20	63	57	11	3
Maghera	53	46	48	14	7
Moneycarragh	19	44	41	14	46
Ardelia	3	2	3	2	23
Quoile	n/c	6	n/c	—	—
Blackwater (Killinchy)	—	n/c	—	—	—
Inler	—	n/c	n/c	—	—
Lagan	—	—	n/c	—	—
Lagan	—	—	n/c	n/c	n/c
Glenariffe	—	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c
Glenorm	—	n/c	n/c	7	n/c
Margy	6	—	—	n/c	n/c
Bush	146	285	172	278	650
Glendun	n/c	—	—	n/c	n/c
Blackstaff	9	29	15	10	43

n/c = No count undertaken.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any research has been carried out in Northern Ireland into the angling effort in hours for salmon or grilse caught; and what comparable information he has for *(a)* the Irish Republic, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* England.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Research has not been carried out in Northern Ireland into the angling effort in hours for salmon and grilse caught. I am not aware of comparable information for the Irish Republic, Scotland, Wales and England.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the number of salmon spawning in each of the salmon rivers of Northern Ireland is sufficient to maintain stocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Though there is concern about the reduced numbers of adult salmon returning to Northern Ireland salmon rivers, there are sufficient numbers to maintain self-sustaining populations in these rivers.

Fisheries Research

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the population of pallen remaining in Lough Neagh; what comparable figures or estimate he has for earlier years; whether any steps are being taken to preserve this fish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* No recent study has been carried out on the population levels of pollen in Lough Neagh. Neither is any statistical information on population figures available for earlier years.

The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland is the body statutorily charged with the conservation and protection of salmon and inland fisheries including pollen in Northern Ireland.

Fishermen taking pollen are required to hold a licence for a single wall set net or trammel net for the taking of freshwater fish and under byelaw 37 of the Fisheries Consolidated and Amendment Byelaws (NI) 1989 can only do so with nets of a mesh size between 25mm and 32mm. This prevents the killing of immature pollen and large spawning adult pollen.

In addition to this, the close season for pollen fishing is 31 October to 31 January and is designed to protect spawning stock.

Harbours

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the minimum depth of water at the river Bann, Barmouth at low tide; and what is the depth at Coleraine harbour at similar tide point.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The minimum depth at low tide at the Barmouth is 4m and at Coleraine harbour is 4·3m.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the minimum depth of water in the shipping channel to Belfast port at low tide.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* It varies from 5·5m to 9·1m.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the minimum depth of water in the shipping channel to Londonderry port at low tide.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* It is 6·9m.

Sea Trout

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the number of sea trout spawning in each of the rivers they frequent in Northern Ireland is sufficient to maintain stocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Yes.

Supplies and Services Boycott

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 21 February

concerning firms which will not carry out work for the security forces or provide material for firms which carry out work for the security forces, if he will indicate the reasons why he will not publish the information requested.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* I do not believe that it would be in the interests of security in Northern Ireland to acquire and publish the information.

WALES

Water Supplies

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the total Government expenditure has been for water supplies in Wales in the last, and current, financial years; and what these sums represent per head of population.

Mr. Grist: In 1988-89 expenditure by the Department on water supplies and sewerage services on grants under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944 to 1971 and the Industrial Development Act 1982 amounted to £1·36 million. The estimated expenditure for the current year is £1·5 million. These sums represent 47p and 52p per head of population.

Craft Initiative

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the itemised costs of designing, producing and distributing the craft initiative brochure launched in May 1988.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The total cost of designing, producing and distributing the craft initiative brochure was £14,273·80. Of this, main elements comprised design work costs at £5,395·80, and production costs at £7,935·00.

Beekeeping

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many beekeepers there are in each county in Wales; what change there has been in the number of beekeepers during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

County	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	[1]*1989*
Clwyd	334	364	343	336	320	336
Dyfed	1,065	1,088	1,087	1,048	993	1,025
Gwent	93	139	151	220	204	236
Gwynedd	477	466	414	462	415	377
Powys	492	490	487	479	456	441
Mid Glamorgan	84	34	32	60	89	63
South Glamorgan	96	48	55	90	103	98
West Glamorgan	103	64	53	115	111	101
Totals	2,744	2,693	2,622	2,810	2,691	2,677

[1] Provisional.

Bethesda-Arfor Bypass

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to build the Bethesda-Arfor bypass during the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: As announced in "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s", start of construction of the A5 Bethesda by-pass is planned in the period April 1991 to March 1994, subject to detailed investigation and completion of design and statutory procedures.

Llandudno General Hospital

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that full emergency services will be retained at the Llandudno general hospital.

Mr. Grist: The provision of services at Llandudno general hospital is a matter for Gwynedd health authority in the first instance. Any proposal to implement a permanent substantial variation in service would require full public consultation, including the opportunity for interested parties to appeal to my right hon. Friend.

Community Centres

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will consider increasing the £100,000 ceiling on grants for the building of community centres.

Mr. Grist: The possibility of raising the Welsh Office grant ceiling for the capital grants to voluntary youth services, village halls and community centres programme is being considered in consultation with the local education authorities.

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of environmental health officers in each of the named districts in Wales in 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1989.

Mr. Grist: The number of local authority non-manual staff employed in environmental health in Wales for 1979, 1984 and 1989 is given in the table. Figures are not available for 1974. It is not possible to identify separately the number of environmental health officers included in each figure in the table. Information by authority is not available centrally.

Number of non-manual staff employed in environmental health[1]

	1979	*1984*	[2]*1989*
Districts	762	787	862
Counties	17	14	11
Total	779	801	873

[1] Full-time equivalents as at September for each year.
[2] Figures for September 1989 are provisional.

Conwy Tunnel

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the original estimated cost of construction of the Conwy tunnel for the A55 road; what is the latest estimated cost for the completion of this work; what were the outstanding payments awaiting to be made by the Welsh Office to the contractors at the end of last January; and whether any contract condition requires interest to be paid on outstanding debts by the Welsh Office.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In September 1986, the original contract price for construction of the Conwy tunnel was £102 million, which is subject to cost price inflation. At that time, the estimated full cost of the scheme, including land, advance works, design and supervision, was £158·4 million, compared with £164·3 million shown in "Roads in Wales: 1989". Payments are made promptly when due. Matters relating to claims are confidential between the parties to the contract.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimates he has as to the likely effects of introducing a tax based on capital values and incomes on the people of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no such estimate, but I hope that those who propose such taxes will tell the people of Wales the extent of the tax burdens that will be placed upon them.

Welsh Office Publications

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last circulated Welsh hon. Members with details of Welsh Office publications; and for what reason the monthly notification system has ceased.

Mr. Peter Walker: Owing to a technical fault it has been necessary to collect these details manually. The fault has now been corrected and an updated list circulated. The list for February will be issued in the next few days, and at the end of each month thereafter.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many kidney transplants have been performed at the Cardiff royal infirmary so far in the current year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many kidney transplants were performed at the Cardiff royal infirmary in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: A total of 66 transplants were carried out at Cardiff royal infirmary in 1989 and three so far this year.

Following completion of a Medical Research Council funded study of factors influencing the availability of donor organs for transplantation, health authorities in Wales have been asked to introduce an audit of deaths in intensive care units and to ensure that there are in place written procedures for the identification of donors and for the action needed to produce a successful donation.

In the light of recent consultation with health authorities on the report of the evaluation of renal services in Wales, Welsh Office officials will be considering with the managing health authority how the renal transplant programme may be further supported.

Leukaemia

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will publish in the *Official Report* known figures for the incidence of leukaemia in areas surrounding nuclear power stations in Wales in the years 1979 to 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information in the form requested is not immediately available. I will write to the hon. and learned Gentleman shortly.

Water Poilution

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the reduction of pollution in Lake Trawsfynydd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The authorisation for the disposal of waste to the lake is under review.

Cancer Unit, North Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning a new cancer unit in North Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 7 February 1990 at column *661*.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make extra money available to local authorities in Wales to enable them to build houses to rent to take the place of those sold under the right-to-buy legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has already announced a 15 per cent. increase in level of resources available for local authorities to spend on housing next year. It is for the authorities to determine how best to use these resources, taking account of local needs and seeking to achieve value for money, particularly in partnership with other housing providers.

Welsh Language

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce proposals for exemptions from Welsh in the national curriculum.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am publishing today for consultation in accordance with section 21(2) of the Education Reform Act proposals for exemptions from Welsh in a limited range of circumstances. The consultation document is being sent to the Curriculum Council for Wales, local education authorities, a wide range of organisations representing educational interests in Wales and, for information, to all schools. Copies have also been placed in the Vote Office and in the Library of the House.

Welsh Development Agency

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total budget of the Welsh Development Agency in 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what proportion of this was allocated to the North Wales office.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* The information is as follows:

The total budget of the Welsh Development Agency was £113 million in 1988-89 and £130·4 million in 1989-90. Land reclamation, environmental improvement, urban renewal and the factory building programmes are controlled and financed centrally by the Welsh Development Agency. No accurate breakdown of expenditure on these activities is available on a regional office basis.

Programmes administered by the regional offices include property management, business development unit courses, advertising and regional promotions, investment, rural conversion grants, DRIVE—the development of rural initiative, venture and enterprise—and administration costs. Details of expenditure by regional office are set out in the table:

Total Regional Office Expenditure on specified programmes		*North Wales Regional Office[1] Expenditure on specified programmes*	
	£ million	£ million	per cent.
1988-89	13·8	3·2	(23)
[2]1989-90	11·1	3·0	(27)

[1] North Wales is served by 2 of the WDA's 6 regional offices, sited at Bangor (covering North Wales West) and Wrexham (covering North Wales East).
[2] Latest forecast expenditure for 1989-90.

Nurses' Grading

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurses have appealed successfully on regrading; how many nurses await the settlement of their grading appeals; how many appeals on regrading have been heard; when he estimates the completion of hearings for nurses appeals in regrading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* I understand that approximately 7,000 appeals have been lodged with employing authorities at local level in Wales. On the basis of the latest information available to the Department from district health authorities, 1,503 of those appeals have been heard of which 184 were successful.

At regional level, 628 appeals have been received to date by the Welsh appeals committee. Nine appeals have been heard of which two were successful.

The Department's officials will be considering urgently with the management and staff sides ways in which the appeal procedures can be speeded up.

Craft Industry

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the itemised costs of the initial review of the craft industry in January and February 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* The review of the craft industry was carried out by Mr. Tony Ball on behalf of the Department at a total cost of £6,212.04. Mr. Ball undertook the study free of fees and the sum of £6,212.04 represents:

£2,503·76 expenses paid to Mr. Ball (covering travel and subsidence at Civil Service rates)

£3,268·80 + VAT support costs to Tony Ball Associates —of which:

	£
Secretarial services:	1,001·00
Fares:	140·80
Creative work:	1,680·80
Printing, photographing, couriers etc.	447·00

£439·48 payments direct to hotels where meetings were held.

Had the work been undertaken at commercial consultancy rates, I estimate that the total cost would have certainly exceeded £25,000. I am grateful to Mr. Ball for completing this major study speedily and free of fees.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge

49. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many old-age pensioners in Scotland are liable to pay only 20 per cent of the poll tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that about 190,000 community charge rebate claimants aged 60 and over in Scotland in 1989-90 are in receipt of the maximum 80 per cent. rebate. Claims from couples are counted as one.

Source: 1. June 1989 count of Community Charge Rebates in Scotland.
2. Housing Benefit Management Information System May and August 1989.

50. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many poll tax payers in Scotland are liable to pay no more than 20 per cent. of the poll tax due to their receipt of the maximum rebate; and what is the average amount they will pay in 1990-91.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest estimate for 1989-90 is that 560,000 claimants in Scotland are receiving the maximum community charge rebate. Claims from couples are counted as one. Detailed information is not yet available on the numbers who will qualify for the maximum rebate in 1990-91 or on the charges that they will have to pay.

Operational Strategy

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made in implementing his Department's operational strategy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department's highly complex £1·7 billion strategy for the computerisation of the social security benefit payment system is proceeding as planned. The pilot exercise in 23 local offices has been completed and the systems are being introduced nationally office by office.

Industrial Injuries

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are affected by the decision in the recent case of McKiernon *v.* Secretary of State; and what steps his Department is taking to trace them.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 22 February at column *892*.

Residential Homes

Mr. James Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider raising income support for residents in independent nursing homes or residential care homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The maximum amounts of income support payable to people in residential care and nursing homes are reviewed every year as part of the general uprating of benefits. These limits will all be increased from 9 April at a cost of an extra £100 million a year.

Social Fund

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the Government's proposals on care in the community will lead to any changes in the administration of community care grants under the social fund.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to change the administration of community care grants.

Disability

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has for the continued existence of the Independent Living Fund in the light of the Government's proposals on care in the community.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 10 January at column 657.

ENERGY

Reactor Programmes (Costs)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), 12 December, *Official Report*, column *533*, on reactor programme costs, if he will place a copy of the report by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 13 December 1989 at column *649*, which made clear that the report could not be published because of its commercial confidentiality.

Calder Hall

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if electricity from the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. nuclear reactor at Calder Hall is to be included in the non-fossil fuel obligation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The initial non-fossil fuel obligation, announced by the Secretary of State on 12 February, has been set at a level which will ensure that existing and committed nuclear plant in England and Wales is contracted for.

Renewable Sources

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to remove responsibility for research and development of renewable sources of energy from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. Responsibility for the research and development programme on renewable sources of energy remains with my Department and the energy technology support unit of the Atomic Energy Authority is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme. The Secretary of State's advisory council on research and development for fuel and power has very recently reviewed and endorsed the Department's programme on renewables.

Sizewell B

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to require from the Central Electricity Generating Board details of how much public money has to date been spent on the Sizewell B project; and if he will publish the information in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Baldry: Nuclear Electric will report regularly to my Department, as has the Central Electricity Generating Board, on progress with Sizewell B, including cost estimates. Expenditure on the project to date is a matter for Nuclear Electric.

CEGB and BNFL

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will outline his Department's responsibilities in respect of the Central Electricity Generating Board and British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: In respect of the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Department assists me in the exercise of my powers under the Electricity Act 1957.

The Government own all the shares in British Nuclear Fuels plc; and the Secretary of State for Energy guarantees the company's borrowing under the terms of the Nuclear Industry Finance Act 1977.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if it is planned to return all foreign nuclear waste to its country of origin in the same quantities of low, intermediate and high-level waste as were imported.

Mr. Baldry: There have been no changes to the arrangements set down in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 May 1986 at columns *500-01*.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what provision British Nuclear Fuels plc makes in its accounts for the costs of disposal of low and intermediate-level wastes which are not chargeable directly to British Nuclear Fuels plc's customers.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the company.

Hinkley B

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions within the past 12 months the cooling mechanism, the oil pumps and the servicing machinery at the Hinkley B nuclear reactor have been simultaneously out of action.

Mr. Baldry: The Central Electricity Generating Board informs me that on no occasion during the past 12 months has the equipment detailed been out of action simultaneously.

Energy Imports (France)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates his Department has made of the level of energy imports from French nuclear power generation over the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Future levels of imports and exports across the interconnector will largely depend on commercial decisions by Electricité de France.

Decommissioning Costs

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action his Department has taken in respect of provision for decommissioning following the reassessment of decommissioning costs by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the nuclear industry.

Nuclear Power Plants (Output)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessments he has made of the reasons for the drop in output of British nuclear power plants as a percentage of total power generation between May 1989 and December 1989.

Mr. Baldry: Nuclear plants provide baseload power at broadly constant levels throughout the year whereas total generation varies according to demand and is usually higher in winter. Nuclear output was in fact higher in December than in May 1989.

Nuclear Programmes (Cash Plans)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what factors account for the difference between the cash plans quoted for nuclear research and development and other programmes, on page 1, chapter 5 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93" (Cm. 1005), and the cash plans quoted for nuclear programmes on page 1, chapter 6 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm. 606).

Mr. Baldry: The main reason is an increased provision for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's decommissioning and waste management operations resulting from Government decisions on the future fast reactor programme and from higher specifications for the handling of radioactive wastes.

Radioactivity

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when and by whom the maximum safe dose of radioactivity for workers at nuclear power stations in Wales has been decided on; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Workers in nuclear power stations in Wales are subject to the same limits for exposure to ionising radiations as all other nuclear power station workers in England and Scotland. The limits are set out in schedule 1 to the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. The regulations comply with an European Community directive (80/836 Euratom, as amended by 84/467) which in turn reflects advice from the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). This advice is now under review.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has proposals to review the legal maximum dose of radioactivity to workers at nuclear plants in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Health and Safety Commission has recently issued a consultative document containing proposals for interim action pending receipt of revised international recommendations. The Health and Safety Commission's working group on ionising radiations will in due course consider the revised recommendations and make proposals for further action if necessary.

Electricity Privatisation

20. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress towards his announced timetable for the privatisation of the electricity industry.

42. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of plans for the electricity privatisation share issue and related matters.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to his reply, 18 December 1989, c. 99-100]:* After careful consideration I have decided that subject to market conditions at the time, the sale of National Power and PowerGen should take place on the same day in February 1991. The successful transfer to the private sector of these substantial companies will mark a further stage in the Government's programme of reinvigorating the economy by introducing the discipline of competition. Even while still formally divisions of the CEGB, these two organisations are giving every indication that they intend to compete vigorously in the electricity market which the Government are creating.

HEALTH

NHS Accounts

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future publication of annual National Health Service accounts.

Mr. Freeman: Publication of the annual series of House of Commons papers on the National Health Service accounts will remain the responsibility of the National Audit Office. Some changes in the format and content of the published accounts will however be necessary from 1991-92 as a consequence of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Durham Health Authority

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give equivalent information relating to the spending of Durham health authority to that given in his replies to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 8 November 1989, *Official Report*, columns *681-82*, relating to Darlington, North Tees and South Tees health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for gross revenue expenditure in Durham health authority derived from the annual accounts of the authority for the years 1982-83 to 1988-89 (the latest year available), are shown in the table.

The allocation of funding to the districts in the Northern region is a matter for the Northern regional health authority (RHA).

Total revenue expenditure on Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS)

£ million

	Cash	*At 1989-90 prices*
1982-83	26·5	37·0
1983-84	27·3	37·7
1984-85	28·8	37·9
1985-86	30·0	37·5
1986-87	32·3	39·0
1987-88	35·0	40·2
1988-89	37·8	40·4

Notes:

1. The figures have been revalued using the Gross Domestic Product deflator.
2. HCHS covers total expenditure including that on hospital, community health, patient transport (i.e. ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
3. Expenditure on family practitioner service (FPS) is excluded. Such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular regions or districts. However, for the years 1982-83 to 1984-85 the Durham Health Authority had an associated FPC and the expenditure recorded in its accounts for those years included small elements in respect of FPC administrative expenses which are not separately identifiable.
4. All capital expenditure is excluded and revenue expenditure incurred by the Northern RHA for the region as a whole is also excluded.

Corneal Transplants

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his reply of 20 February, what factors limit the number of corneal transplants which may be performed in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Several factors can affect the number of corneal transplants performed, including the availability of donated tissue and other resources.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a breakdown of the capital allocations for acute hospital services, excluding regional specialties, by district, within the Mersey region since 1975.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally. Allocations to districts are a matter for regions and the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority for this information.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures his Department has taken to ensure that the new generation of five hydroxytriptomide drugs are not addictive and do not have dangerous side effects.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Satisfactory controls already exist under the Medicines Act to ensure that newly developed drugs are examined for safety, quality and efficacy by the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) before a product licence is granted. Effective medicines may cause side effects in some patients and doctors take account of risk-benefit factors when prescribing. Doctors are advised of known side effects by means of a range of sources including product data sheets. All newly licensed drugs are carefully monitored for side effects by CSM.

Home Helps

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many home helps are employed to serve the elderly population in the Bolton area; what is the home help-elderly householder ratio; and what is the hourly rate of pay which such employees receive.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available centrally about the number of home helps involved directly with the elderly. However, the total number (whole-time equivalents) of home helps in Bolton at 30 September 1988 was 377; the rate per 1,000 population aged over 65 was 9·8. Information on rates of pay is not held by the Department.

Disablement Services Authority

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that the Disablement Services Authority is adequately funded to enable it to provide *(a)* lightweight wheelchairs, *(b)* indoor/outdoor powered wheelchairs and *(c)* special seating to those people who have been assessed as needing them.

Mr. Freeman: It is open to the Disablement Services Authority to allocate such sums as it sees fit from within its budget in line with the needs of its services and its policies.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the policies of the Disablement Services Authority with regard to the provision of *(a)* lightweight wheelchairs, *(b)* indoor/outdoor powered wheelchairs and *(c)* special seating.

Mr. Freeman: The Disablement Services Authority is a special health authority and in common with all health authorities its policies and their implementation are monitored through the NHS planning and review process.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received concerning the need for adequate funding to the Disablement Services Authority to enable it to provide *(a)* lightweight wheelchairs, *(b)* indoor/outdoor powered wheelchairs and *(c)* special seating to those people who have been assessed as needing them.

Mr. Freeman: We have received a small number of letters about powered wheelchairs and special seating. We have not received any representations about lightweight wheelchairs.

Radiation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ask the chairman of the Medical Research Council to review the findings of the "Medical Research Council Report: the Hazards to Man of Nuclear and Allied Radiations", Cmnd. 9780, published in June 1956, in the light of the findings of the Gardner report on radiation risks.

Mr. Freeman: As I announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 15 February, at columns *397-98*, I have referred the results of the case-control study from the MRC epidemiology unit to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) for its urgent consideration and preliminary advice. I shall ensure that a copy of the 1956 MRC report is made available to the committee.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by local authority area the total number of places in *(a)* private, *(b)* voluntary and *(c)* local authority residential and nursing homes; if he will give a breakdown of these places along the lines of the categories used by his Department to decide on limits for payments to people living in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes; and if he will give a breakdown of the numbers of people in such homes who receive income support, by local authority area.

Mr. Freeman: The information on number of places in residential accommodation is not available in the form requested. Information at 31 March 1988 about the number of places in *(a)* registered private, *(b)* registered voluntary and *(c)* local authority residential care homes by local authority and by primary function has been placed in the Library. These figures are provisional.

Information on private and voluntary nursing homes is not collected centrally in the format requested. For the latest information available centrally on the number of beds in each district health authority area, I refer the hon. Member to the publication "Private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984, National, Regional and District Summaries for the financial year 1987-88", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

The information requested about income support is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, but I understand that the information is not available in the form requested. At May 1989 there were 119,000 people receiving income support in residential care homes and 57,000 claimants in nursing homes.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many in-patients and out-patients, respectively, were treated, and what was the hospital's revenue, in respect of *(a)* the Christie hospital, Manchester, and *(b)* the Royal Marsden hospital, London, in the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement about the cost-effectiveness of treatment in the case of each of those hospitals;

(2) if he will publish the cost *(a)* per in-patient case and *(b)* per out-patient attendance at the Christie hospital, Manchester, and at the Royal Marsden hospital, London, in respect of the most recent year for which figures are available; and what are the reasons for the disparity in cost between these two cancer treatment hospitals.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 14 December 1989]*: For the purposes of specialty costing, financial returns from health authorities provided to the Department categorise expenditure on direct patient services according to the main specialty of the consultant in charge of the treatment, rather than upon the specific treatment received.

Under this categorisation, the expenditure on patient treatment of the Royal Marsden special health authority is categorised under "other medical", which includes medical oncology amongst other specialty functions. Christie hospital, Manchester, however, undertakes work covering a wider range of specialties in addition to those categories which include treatment of cancer, so direct comparisons of cost are not practicable centrally.

Following is a table of data derived from financial returns held by the Department.

There are often good reasons for differences between hospitals in particular costs which can arise from differences in the particular diagnoses of the patients treated, the severity of the condition treated and length of time required for treatment, and whether treatment can be provided on an out-patient basis or requires admission to a hospital bed.

	Royal Marsden SHA "Other medical"	*Christie Hospital "Other medical"*	*Radiotherapy*
Expenditure on patients using a bed £	13,088,575	2,959,075	4,379,215
Patient Days	94,099	19,386	55,309
Consultant episodes	13,219	16,510	6,029
Cost per day £	139·09	152·64	79·18
Cost per episode £	990·13	179·23	726·36
Expenditure on outpatients £	6,742,122	533,115	1,177,563
Number of attendances	90,849	7,415	34,507
Cost per attendance £	74·21	71·90	34·13

Notes:

1. Patients using a bed includes in-patients and day cases who are admitted to hospital for procedures undertaken during one day.
2. The expenditure in the table is related to the direct patient treatment costs only and does not include general overheads costs borne by individual health authorities as a whole.

Regional Allocations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the allocations to National Health Service regions from 1982-83 to 1990-91 in current and standard prices in the case of each region indicating the value of these allocations in standard prices on a per capita basis.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 10 January 1990]*: The information requested is shown in the tables, at current cash levels and at 1990-91 cash levels using the GDP deflator. The allocations shown relate to the main population based allocations and do not include additional special allocations such as the service increment for teaching.

Allocations *£000s at cash*

Region	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	479,616	539,388	560,701	601,519	639,403	679,482	735,253	817,311	884,179
Yorkshire	537,778	606,123	629,450	676,116	720,831	767,080	829,677	920,376	999,322
Trent	631,328	717,046	746,789	810,705	866,468	926,641	1,010,146	1,126,131	1,227,583
East Anglian	269,985	307,251	321,224	345,723	371,144	400,572	437,676	488,050	539,690
North West Thames	581,173	626,483	649,174	686,495	723,116	748,568	808,071	895,111	968,446
North East Thames	681,128	792,648	806,429	853,455	900,051	933,655	1,007,139	1,114,489	1,197,287
South East Thames	628,878	697,381	715,293	756,200	796,566	830,504	897,538	1,000,077	1,092,602
South West Thames	505,602	544,658	558,782	590,095	620,117	690,592	745,778	828,304	900,756
Wessex	383,805	434,435	454,024	491,471	527,732	564,636	614,551	687,346	757,653
Oxford	307,453	345,704	357,430	386,127	412,181	440,700	482,415	548,386	595,806
South Western	505,602	528,459	550,356	594,068	634,384	672,786	731,564	818,155	896,046
West Midlands	749,136	841,616	875,293	944,388	1,015,057	1,088,488	1,185,562	1,316,619	1,419,349
Mersey	395,333	442,733	457,822	486,642	513,227	542,546	585,517	652,367	699,175
North Western	661,535	742,325	771,417	826,052	875,174	928,848	1,004,859	1,117,456	1,199,999
Total	7,281,698	8,166,250	8,454,184	9,049,056	9,615,451	10,215,098	11,276,275	12,330,178	13,377,893

Notes:
1. To allow for consistency of comparison the allocations shown above exclude the special allocations such as the Service Increment for Teaching and Supra Regional Services etc.
2. 1989-90 is based on the allocations for services provided in the region using the Resource Allocation Working Party Formula (RAWP)
3. 1990-91 is based on the allocations for resident population, calculated using the new allocation formula, adjusted for the effect of cross boundary flows, so that they are on a comparable basis to 1989-90.

Allocations *£000s at constant 1990-91 cash levels*

Region	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	728,268	782,485	774,894	788,940	811,287	818,742	826,057	858,177	884,179
Yorkshire	816,584	879,297	869,906	886,780	914,605	924,293	932,142	966,395	999,322
Trent	958,634	1,040,211	1,032,070	1,063,304	1,099,392	116,566	1,134,899	1,182,438	1,227,583
East Anglian	409,956	445,726	443,935	453,443	470,915	482,669	491,729	512,453	539,690
North West Thames	882,476	908,833	897,165	900,393	917,504	901,987	907,868	939,867	968,446
North East Thames	1,034,252	1,149,887	1,114,493	1,119,375	1,142,003	1,125,008	1,131,521	1,170,213	1,197,287
South East Thames	954,914	1,011,684	988,542	991,817	1,010,699	1,000,716	1,008,384	1,050,081	1,092,602
South West Thames	767,726	790,130	772,242	773,957	786,817	832,129	837,882	869,719	900,756
Wessex	582,785	630,231	627,466	644,604	669,597	680,358	690,448	721,713	757,653
Oxford	466,849	501,509	493,972	506,436	522,983	531,021	541,993	575,805	595,806
South Western	767,726	766,630	760,597	779,168	804,919	810,673	821,912	859,063	896,046
West Midlands	1,137,518	1,220,924	1,209,664	1,238,640	1,287,925	1,311,574	1,331,979	1,382,450	1,419,349
Mersey	600,289	642,268	632,715	638,270	651,193	653,741	657,828	684,985	699,175
North Western	1,004,501	1,076,883	1,066,106	1,083,433	1,110,438	1,119,215	1,128,959	1,173,329	1,199,999
Total	11,056,822	11,846,697	11,683,767	11,868,561	12,200,277	12,308,682	12,668,895	12,946,687	13,377,893

Allocation per capita *£s At constant 1990-91 cash levels*

Region	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	236·28	251·30	249·42	256·79	264·64	267·60	269·19	282·08	289·12
Yorkshire	228·01	244·81	241·84	246·99	254·64	257·40	258·60	266·22	276·77
Trent	210·45	226·44	224·43	229·88	237·34	241·47	243·80	250·07	262·45
East Anglian	217·97	235·22	231·86	233·10	240·37	245·76	243·55	240·59	262·74
North West Thames	257·44	261·89	260·08	260·94	265·37	259·71	258·45	262·78	274·37
North East Thames	279·96	306·03	298·59	297·70	303·44	301·25	299·64	306·10	316·12
South East Thames	269·07	281·26	275·81	276·77	281·63	278·85	276·31	281·63	297·63
South West Thames	268·59	281·05	262·15	262·61	266·47	281·86	280·46	285·31	300·14
Wessex	215·61	232·25	225·98	227·35	234·41	237·10	236·26	235·32	255·39
Oxford	202·43	215·42	208·88	208·44	213·11	216·31	216·62	216·83	232·36
South Western	238·12	236·28	246·57	249·99	257·31	258·20	256·58	258·44	276·57
West Midlands	220·70	235·65	233·43	238·42	247·53	253·50	256·16	263·10	272·20
Mersey	245·20	261·83	259·00	264·67	270·96	272·03	273·47	287·57	291·81
North Western	250·99	266·85	265·33	271·65	278·49	281·63	283·44	294·72	301·51
England	237·95	253·21	249·66	252·78	259·34	261·87	266·77	267·65	280·16

Note. Calculated using actual populations within regional boundaries.

NHS Spending (Dewsbury)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost per head of spending in the National Health Service for Dewsbury health authority for each year since 1974.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 25 January 1990]:* Following is information for the Dewsbury health authority since its establishment on 1 April 1982.

Dewsbury Health Authority—Total Revenue Expenditure on Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) Per Resident

	£ (cash)
1982-83	118
1983-84	123
1984-85	130
1985-86	139
1986-87	149
1987-88	162
1988-89	181

Sources:
(a) Annual accounts of the Dewsbury Health Authority for the financial years 1982-83 to 1988-89.
(b) Mid-year estimates of resident population—1982 to 1988 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:
1. Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) covers total expenditure including that on hospital, community health and other services.
2. The authority's capital expenditure and all expenditure incurred by the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority on behalf of the region as a whole is excluded. Expenditure on family practitioner services, which is accounted for by family practitioner committees and cannot strictly be attributed to particular regions or districts, is also excluded.
3. The population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one district who receive treatment in another or for differences in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.
4. Prior to 1 April 1982 the authority's predecessor health district formed part of a larger area health authority and in those cases district based figures were not collected centrally.

Hospital Spending

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report*, hospital expenditure per head for each of the regional health authorities in England for each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 30 January 1990]:* Figures for hospital services (HS) and hospital and community health services (HCHS) for the years 1984-85 to 1988-89 are shown in the table.

Total revenue expenditure per resident for hospital services (HS) and hospital and community health services (HCHS) by region

Region	1984-85		1985-86		1986-87		1987-88		1988-89	
	HS £ cash	HCHS £ cash	HS £ cash	HCHS £ cash	HS £ cash	HCHS £ cash	HS £ cash	HCHS £ cash	HS £ cash	HCHS £ cash
Northern	153	190	162	201	172	215	185	236	203	261
Yorkshire	148	183	157	194	166	207	177	226	192	248
Trent	139	172	147	182	157	197	169	217	186	240
East Anglian	139	173	146	182	155	195	166	214	184	239
North West Thames	163	202	169	209	178	222	189	238	213	272
North East Thames	195	236	202	244	213	259	224	278	250	312
South East Thames	173	215	180	224	187	236	197	255	216	284
South West Thames	159	198	164	205	173	219	184	251	203	280
Wessex	138	171	143	178	152	190	160	206	176	229
Oxford	126	159	131	165	136	175	145	191	161	212
South Western	146	183	153	191	161	204	169	221	183	243
West Midlands	142	178	149	187	160	202	171	221	187	243
Mersey	162	199	170	209	180	224	191	244	208	269
North Western	161	204	169	215	180	231	191	251	210	276

Sources:
(a) Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England—1984-85 to 1988-89.
(b) Mid-year estimates of resident populations—1984 to 1988 (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:
1. Capital expenditure and expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded.
2. The figures for hospital services include all revenue expenditure incurred by health authorities on all their hospital sites. The figures for Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) cover total revenue expenditure including that on hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
3. The population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one region who receive treatment in another or for differences in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.
4. The figures for the Thames regions are influenced by the fact that South West Thames Regional Health Authority (RHA) now accounts for the entire cost of the London Ambulance Service which was formerly shared by all four Thames RHAs.

Nursing Homes (Prescriptions)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he has taken to check prescriptions taken to dispensing chemists on behalf of elderly residents in private nursing homes are not misused;

(2) what steps have been taken to ensure surplus prescribed drugs in private nursing homes are not stockpiled for unauthorised use.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 9 February 1990, c. 806]:* I regret that I implied that all private nursing homes employed pharmacists. I wish to make the following clarification.

Prescription-only medicines in private nursing homes can be supplied by a pharmacist only on the signed order of a medical practitioner or dentist. It is for the dispensing pharmacist to satisfy himself that it is a proper prescription for that drug. The supply of medicines to patients in private nursing homes is almost always by means of prescriptions from a general practitioner in respect of individual patients. This method of prescribing helps to ensure that excessive quantitites of prescribed drugs are not being stockpiled. Medicines dispensed to individual patients become the property of that patient and, unless treatment has been completed, are normally given to the patient on discharge or otherwise destroyed.

The prescribing, dispensing and monitoring of the use of controlled drugs is governed by the Misuse of Drugs Regulations.

The Registered Homes Act 1984 requires the registering district health authority to inspect private nursing homes at least twice each year to ensure that adequate arrangements exist for the recording, safekeeping, handling and disposal of drugs in the possession of patients. In some private nursing homes a medical practitioner or pharmacist may be retained to advise the person registered as responsible for the home on how medicines should be controlled.

TRANSPORT

European Rail System

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what projections his Department has made in respect of the future trends in market share of freight traffic from Europe to the United Kingdom of *(a)* rail and *(b)* road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has made no such projections.

British Rail (Borrowing)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on allowing British Rail to borrow money from the private sector.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend is concerned that British Rail should finance its operations in the most cost-effective manner possible: BR has the objective of increasing further the contribution to its business of the private sector, where this enables more cost-effective and competitive services to be provided. BR is normally required to take its loan finance from the national loans fund (NLF), which charges lower interest rates than those generally available in the private sector. BR is permitted to borrow on a temporary basis from financial institutions authorised to take deposits under the Banking Act 1987.

Cyclists

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the cities and towns in the United Kingdom which have specially designed cycle routes and facilities.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not available centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. As part of our programme of research into cycling, the Department has participated with highway authorities on schemes in the following localities:

Cycle Routes Programme
- Stockton
- Bedford
- Exeter
- Southampton
- Nottingham
- Cambridge

Innovatory facilities
- Hull
- Cambridge
- Nottingham
- London:
  - Westminster
  - Southwark
  - Shepherds Bush
  - Hammersmith
  - Hillingdon
  - Ealing
- Canterbury
- Oxford
- Chelmsford
- Preston
- Manchester
- Newark
- Liverpool
- Bristol
- Cheltenham
- Darlington

The Department is about to publish a revised bibliography of publications on cycling. It includes details on most of the route projects and innovatory schemes listed. I shall send the hon. Member a copy of the new bibliography as soon as it is available. Further copies of it will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to investigate the case for incorporating a cyclist awareness section into the driving test for motor vehicle learner drivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's advice to learner drivers, and its driving test procedures, already attach weight to awareness of cyclists and to consideration towards them along with other vulnerable road users.

A6 Disley-High Lane Bypass

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove of 21 February, what are the reasons for the cost differences between the preferred route (modified brown) on the proposed A6 Disley-High Lane bypass and the brown route.

Mr. Atkins: The preferred route is 4 km shorter than the original brown route. It avoids the need for extensive work in the Newtown area and a diversion of the railway at Gowhole.

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether British Coal registered a formal objection to the construction of the proposed A6 Disley-High Lane bypass along the lines of route of the purple, blue and orange proposals.

Mr. Atkins: No. British Coal's comments were submitted during consultations prior to announcement of a preferred route.

Environmental Adviser

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he used in choosing Professor Hoskins as his adviser on environmental matters; for how long the appointment is; and what payments will be made to Professor Hoskins for his assistance.

Mr. Atkins: Professor Hoskins is professor of meteorology at Reading university and is a leading authority on global warming, climatic change and related matters. As such he appeared to my right hon. Friend to be a suitable person to advise him on the implications of these issues for transport policy.

Professor Hoskins is a part-time special adviser and does not have a fixed-term appointment. As is the normal

practice with special advisers his remuneration is determined by reference to his current level of earnings and is therefore confidential.

Beach Pollution (Sussex)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it has now been possible to identify the source of the dangerous chemicals washed up on Sussex beaches which were referred to in his answer to the private notice question on 22 February, *Official Report*, columns 1067-72; whether any action is to be taken by his Department against those responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: With the full co-operation of the shipping agent and local authorities concerned, the marine pollution control unit has been able to determine that the potassium cyanide which came ashore on the Sussex coast on 21 February and succeeding days, had been shipped on the MV Fathulkhair which left Sheerness on 31 January bound for the Persian Gulf. It is probable that other items washed ashore came from the same source.

The vessel encountered heavy weather on her passage down the Channel and whilst off Ushant (in a French area of responsibility) on 2 February lost a quantity of cargo overboard. After putting back into Cherbourg to resecure and survey cargo, the vessel encountered further heavy weather and lost more items overboard between 12 and 14 February against whilst off Ushant.

As the cargo was lost outside United Kingdom territorial waters and the ship is registered in Qatar, my Department is writing to the Qatar authorities to inquire into the incident and if it is found that the chemicals were stowed improperly, to establish who was responsible and to ask what action they intend to take.

In any event marine surveyors of the Department will board the vessel when next it arrives in a United Kingdom port to ensure that if it loads dangerous cargo it will be in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations.

Stockport Bypass

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work will commence on the A6(M) Stockport bypass.

Mr. Atkins: Time will be needed for design work, supplementary orders and a compulsory purchase order. A second public inquiry is likely. Construction could then start by the end of 1992.

Confidential Road Studies

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what circumstances county councils carry out confidential road studies for his Department on trunk roads; how prevalent this practice is; what access elected councillors of the relevant authorities have to such studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Agent county councils normally undertake scheme investigation studies for trunk roads, but exceptionally private consultants may be commissioned where a study is large or complex.

Studies are "confidential" only in that full findings are not made public, but if either a national or regional scheme results the statutory consultation procedures apply.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received within the last months from the chairman of British Rail in respect of the phasing out of the subsidy to Network SouthEast.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend had detailed discussions with Sir Robert Reid before agreeing with him the objectives for British Rail that were announced on 19 December.

Stranraer-Euston Rail Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if, pursuant to his statement concerning under-use of the Stranraer-Euston rail service, *Official Report*, 14 February, column *333*, he will give the figures on which he bases his statement.

Mr. Portillo: I understand from British Rail that the number of people using the Stranraer-Glasgow part of the Stranraer-Euston sleeper services averages 10 per night.

Leicester Eastern Bypass

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when work on the Leicester eastern bypass (A6-A46), listed in "Roads for Prosperity", will be commenced;

(2) if the Leicester eastern bypass (A6-A46) will be constructed to dual carriageway standard.

Mr. Atkins: Consultants have still to be appointed for the proposed Leicester eastern bypass and a detailed programme is not available at this early stage. It is hoped to announce a preferred route in 1994, following public consultation, as announced in "Trunk Roads, England —Into the 1990s" on 20 February. The carriageway standard has yet to be determined.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* all successful United Kingdom projects chosen by the European Commission for research and development on agricultural technologies in the Eclair programme; and what proportion of the total projects allocated came from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: All projects under the EC Eclair programme have to be joint ventures involving participants in more than one member state. In the first tranche under this programme, the EC Commission has selected 23 projects for contract negotiation in 13 of which there is United Kingdom participation. The projects concerned are:

(a) optimisation of lignin in crop and in industrial plants through genetic engineering;
(b) development and production of low temperature storage tolerant potato cultivars;
(c) improvement of yield and food conservation in salmonids and maricultured fish;
(d) improvement of storage capabilities of fresh fruits and vegetables through the biotechnological and technological control of ethylene;
(e) development of improved strains of insect parasitic nematodes for control of insect pests in horticulture and agriculture;

(f) development of liquid fertilisers based on naturally occurring seaweeds;
(g) development of a delivery system for the oral administration of vaccines for the prevention of diseases in fish in agriculture;
(h) development of environmentally safe pest control systems for European olives;
(i) novel anti fungal proteins; applications in crop protection;
(j) novel biosynthetic routes for biodegradation of polyhydroxy alkanoates made by genetically engineered strains of bacteria and plants;
(k) amines: animal monitoring and identification;
(l) European maize use in the starch industry in relation to growing areas and cultivation techniques; and
(m) the development of biotechnology based in vitro production of sex-determination, freeze-storage and transfer of bovine embryos.

Chicken Feed

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outlaw the addition of colouring matter to chicken feed designed to brighten the colour of the egg yolk.

Mr. Maclean: Regulation of these colouring matters is a matter for agreement within the EC. The continued use of one of the principal colourants is currently being examined by expert committees both in the EC and also in this country.

Food and Drink Imports

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what precautions to check imported food and drink for contamination are in operation.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

Imported food and drink are subject to the Imported Food Regulations 1984 which require food to be sound, wholesome and fit for human consumption. Monitoring, as appropriate, to ensure that food and drink meet these criteria, is carried out by local enforcement authorities including port health authorities.

Bananas

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a chart or table showing *(a)* the percentage share and *(b)* the tonnage share of the European Community banana market held by (i) Community producers, (ii) African, Caribbean and Pacific producers, (iii) dollar (Central and South American) producers and (iv) others, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Curry: The percentage and tonnage share of the European Community banana market held by (i) Community producers; (ii) African, Caribbean and Pacific producers, (iii) dollar producers and (iv) others in each of the last five years for which complete data is available is as follows:

Imports of bananas into the European Community 1984-88

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Total	2,289,843	2,396,683	2,635,305	2,608,659	2,933,007
of which					
Community Producers					
tonnes	712,002	697,897	860,494	681,554	690,572
per cent.	31	29	32	26	23
ACP Producers					
tonnes	335,997	413,395	445,065	456,623	513,707
per cent.	15	17	17	18	18
Dollar Producers					
tonnes	1,204,265	1,253,589	1,255,897	1,366,017	1,642,595
per cent.	52	53	48	52	56
Other					
tonnes	37,579	31,802	73,849	104,465	86,133
per cent.	2	1	3	4	3

Source: Eurostat.
Note:—Eurostat data does not include imports from the Canary Islands for 1984 and 1985 and for imports from Madeira throughout the period. Estimates of such imports from FAO data have been added to the Eurostat data to give comparable coverage. In the breakdown such imports are included under Community Producers.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of payments permitted under European Economic Community less-favoured areas directive; what are the current rates of hill subsidies and payments; and what conclusions he has reached on his policy in this matter.

Mr. Curry: The EC structures regulation (797/85, as amended) currently provides the framework for measures to support farmers in the less-favoured areas. The principal form of support is the system of hill livestock compensatory allowances, though there is also provision for other measures such as enhanced rates of capital grant in the LFA. Under regulation 797/85, the HLCA rates have to be fixed according to the severity of the permanent natural handicaps affecting farming activities, within prescribed minimum and maximum levels per livestock unit and a maximum payment per hectare. At 1 January 1990, the effective minimum rate in the United Kingdom was £14·34 per cow and £2·15 per ewe; the maximum rate was £71·37 per cow and £10·70 per ewe; and total payments were subject to a maximum of £71·37 per hectare. The current HLCA rates payable in the United Kingdom are:

Severely Disadvantaged Area of the LFA	*£ per head*
Cows	54·50
Hardy Breed Ewes	7·50
Other Ewes	4·50
Disadvantaged Area	
Cows	27·25
Ewes	2·25

The maximum payable per hectare is £62·48 in the severely disadvantaged area and £46·86 in the disadvantaged area.

My right hon. Friend indicated the Government's policy towards the hill and upland areas in his statement to the House on 30 January 1990, *Official Report*, columns 159-170.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action he proposes to take to reduce the number of food poisoning incidents.

Mr. Maclean: The government are seeking through the Food Safety Bill to update and strengthen their powers in relation to food safety. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Mr. Knox), *Official Report*, 15 February, column *399*, which referred to the response we have made to part one of the report of the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food.

Industrial Waste

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 106, whether he has submitted any further applications to the Oslo commission for licences to dump industrial waste in the North sea.

Mr. Curry: Two further sets of information have been sent to the Oslo commission about proposals to issue sea dumping licences for the following wastes:

Material	*Tonnage*
Fine Organic	8,000
Wash water from the synthesis of antibiotic and anti-ulcer medicines	-
Tate and Lyle Sugars	30,000
Chalk solution from sugar refining	

Dumping of these two wastes at sea will cease as soon as alternative means of disposal are in place. The companies are working to tight timetables and dumping should end within a year.

Green Currency Gaps

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated cost of eliminating the green currency gaps; and what would be the resultant cash effect upon United Kingdom agriculture.

Mr. Curry: The Government are committed to eliminating the monetary gap associated with the green pound by the end of 1992 at the latest. The effect of a complete devaluation of the green pound will depend on movements in the market rate of sterling over this period. It is estimated that a devaluation to eliminate the present monetary gap would add about £290 million in a full year to public expenditure in the United Kingdom. This expenditure would be mainly financed from the EC budget to which the United Kingdom, of course, contributes. Such a devaluation would increase farmers' incomes by over £700 million in a full year and add around 1·25 per cent. to retail food prices on average.

Food Prices

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the average increase in the price of food over the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: Over the 10 years to January 1990, the average annual increase in food prices was 5·3 per cent.

Pesticides

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the review and approval of pesticides.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington (Mr. Corbyn) on 8 February, *Official Report*, column *728*.

Artificial Flavouring

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he plans to take to enable consumers, seeking to avoid the use of artificial flavourings, to make an informed choice in respect of the legal term flavour.

Mr. Maclean: Under existing food labelling legislation consumers can choose between food where the flavour is derived wholly or mainly from the named food, and those artificially flavoured. For example the descriptions "strawberry flavoured" or simply "strawberry" can only be used to describe food in the first category. "Strawberry flavour" may be used for food in the second category where the flavour does not come mainly from strawberries. The relevant provisions can be found in schedule 7 to the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 and are fully explained in our free booklet "Look at the Label".

Bread Prices

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the average price for a 1lb loaf of bread and the average price for an unmilled ton of wheat grown in the United Kingdom for the years 1986 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Average price of[1] 1lb loaf of bread Pence per loaf	*Average price of[2] home grown wheat £ per tonne*
1986	43·0	111·18
1987	43·7	111·00
1988	46·8	105·14
1989	48·8	105·72

[1] White sliced 8,000 gm. loaf. *Source:* CSO.
[2] Unmilled home grown bread wheat. *Source:* MAFF.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require the police to give every victim of violence, rape and child abuse the leaflet which outlines the availability of financial assistance provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrangements for giving information to victims are the responsibility of individual chief officers of police. However, existing Home Office guidance to the police stresses that people who have suffered injury as a result of crime should, whenever possible, be handed a copy of the leaflet "Victims of Crimes of Violence: A Guide to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme".

Crime Reduction

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the achievements of Her Majesty's Government in reducing crime since June 1987.

Mr. Waddington: The measures which we have taken to reduce crime since 1979 are set out in my reply today to another question from my hon. and learned Friend. Comparing the 12 months to September 1989—the most recent period for which figures are available—with the 12 months to September 1987, the number of offences recorded by the police has fallen from 3,893,000 to 3,779,000, a decrease of 3 per cent.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the steps taken by Her Majesty's Government since 1979 to reduce crime.

Mr. Waddington: Since 1979 we have increased police manpower by 24,000 (including civilians). We have given the courts the powers they need by increasing the maximum penalties for certain offences, and by making provision for the confiscation of profits made by drug traffickers and other criminals. We have prohibited certain firearms and other weapons, and taken steps to control the possession of knives in public places.

Following the successful five towns initiative in 1986, we have set up a safer cities programme to co-ordinate crime prevention activity in high-crime inner-city areas. We have undertaken a number of substantial crime prevention publicity campaigns and over 3 million copies of the crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" have been distributed. An independent organisation, Crime Concern, was set up with Home Office assistance in 1988, with the objective of supporting and developing local crime prevention activity.

Liquor Sales

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a system of licences for wholesalers who sell intoxicating liquor.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no present plans to do so.

Right of Abode

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long those issued with certificates of entitlement to the right of abode had to wait for their applications to be processed in *(a)* January 1988, *(b)* June 1988, *(c)* January 1989, *(d)* June 1989 and *(e)* January 1990 or the nearest available date; how many cases were awaiting decision in the British overseas citizens and right of abode group at each of the above dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on waiting times and on the numbers of cases outstanding for persons applying in the United Kingdom for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode is not available for the periods requested. On 21 February 1990, a total of 189 applications were waiting consideration in the United Kingdom; the majority were less than six weeks old and the oldest was dated 13 October 1989. In the case of persons applying to posts abroad for certificates of entitlement to the right of abode, information is available only for the Indian sub-continent. Since 1988, such applicants have been interviewed within three months of applying. Information on the waiting time between interview and the issue of a certificate is not available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications were made for certificates of entitlement to the right of abode; how many certificates were issued; how much money was collected in fees for such applications; how many staff, and at what grades, were in post to deal with the processing of such applications in each quarter since January 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No separate record is maintained of the number of applications received from persons in the United Kingdom for certificates of entitlement to the right of abode. The remainder of the information requested is as follows:

Quarter ending	*Certificates issued*[1]	*Fees collected*[2] *(£)*
31 March 1988	340	—
30 June 1988	464	—
30 September 1988	419	—
31 December 1988	652	—
31 March 1989	594	3,816·00
30 June 1989	502	5,625·00
30 September 1989	581	6,451·00
31 December 1989	626	6,278·50

[1] The figures include new and renewed certificates issued.
[2] Fees were introduced on 15 December 1988 in respect of new certificates only.

Since January 1988, the processing of certificate applications made in the United Kingdom has required a team of two executive officers, two administrative officers and two administrative assistants.

In addition, in the whole of 1988, a total of 10,200 certificates of entitlement to the right of abode in the United Kingdom including confirmations of the right of abode, were issued to persons applying at posts abroad. The other information requested is not available centrally for such cases.

Manchester Airport (Police)

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers of the Greater Manchester police authority were stationed at Manchester international airport in each of the last five years; and what percentage of the total strength of the Greater Manchester police authority this represented in the same period and at the last available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

31 December	*Officers deployed at airport*	*Force strength*	*Percentage airport deployment of force strength*
1989	146	6,965	2·1
1988	138	6,844	2·0
1987	131	7,021	1·9
1986	131	6,725	1·9
1985	131	6,779	1·9
1984	131	6,745	1·9

Dr. Sinha (Police Interview)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for a report on the result of the interview of Dr. Sinha at Forest Gate police station on 1 February.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that following their interview with Dr. Sinha on 1 February, the Metropolitan police still have his case under consideration.

DEFENCE

Tendering

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the impact of improved tendering procedures upon the cost effectiveness of his Department's expenditure.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our increased use of competitive tendering, including announcements in the MOD contracts bulletin, continues to achieve substantial savings. It is not easy to quantify these in the absence of any specific indication of the price which would have been achieved without competition. Our more commercial approach to procurement fosters improvements in the efficiency and international competitiveness of the British defence industry.

Independent European Programme Group

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress made within the independent European programme group on the production of complementary contract bulletins by each of the 13 member countries; and what was the outcome of the recent meeting of the independent European programme group at Gleneagles in Scotland.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Defence Ministers of the 13 independent European programme group (IEPG) nations met in Gleneagles on 21 February 1990. Nine IEPG nations have now started regular publication of bulletins of defence contract opportunities; the rest should follow later this year. This marks a major step towards the opening of the European defence equipment market. Ministers also reviewed progress on other aspects of the step by step opening of the European defence equipment market, and the establishment of the EUCLID European research and technology programme. A copy of the communiqué issued after the meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

Radiation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many studies on radiation exposure to the work force at the research, development and operational establishments at *(a)* Llanishen, *(b)* Aldermaston, *(c)* Burghfield, *(d)* Devonport, *(e)* Rosyth, *(f)* Chatham and *(g)* Vulcan at Dounreay have been conducted (i) by his Department and (ii) by independent authorities since each facility began operations;

(2) if he will make it his policy to initiate a study into the health effects of radiation on workers and their families based at Llanishen, Burghfield, Aldermaston and the Royal Navy college at Greenwich;

(3) if he will make it his policy to initiate a study into the health effects of radiation on the work force at the Devonport and Rosyth shipyards.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Radiation exposures to radiation workers at MOD establishments are kept under constant local review by the radiation protection advisers and local management, and are also scrutinised by the Health and Safety Executive. Such exposures are authorised solely on the basis that they are justified, that they comply with statutory limits, and that they are as low as reasonably practicable. The data is placed on the national register of radiation workers and is included in a current mortality study by the National Radiological Protection Board on the whole of the United Kingdom nuclear industry.

The committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment has recommended a nationwide study of leukaemia in children of workers in the nuclear industry. The Department of Health is considering how this study might be carried out, and we will co-operate fully as appropriate.

The following independent studies on radiation exposure in the MOD work force have been published:

(i) 'Report of an Investigation into Radiological Health and Safety at the Ministry of Defence (Procurement Executive) Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston', by Sir Edward Pochin, 30 October 1978.

(ii) 'AWE Mortality Study', published in the British Medical Journal, No. 6651, Vol. 297 on 24 September 1988.

(iii) 'Radiation induced Chromosome Aberrations in Nuclear—Dockyard Workers' (a study on Rosyth Dockyard Workers), published in Nature (Evans et al, Vol. 277, p531, 1979).

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications of the Gardner report on radiation risks for the continued use of nuclear materials by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Radiation exposures continue to be authorised by the MOD only on the basis that they are justified, comply with statutory limits, and are as low as reasonably practicable. This is a continuing process and I see no reason to change current practice.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what precautions against radiation exposure will be taken in the removal of the research reactor from the Royal Naval college at Greenwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We will comply with all relevant statutory requirements and radiation exposure will be kept as low as reasonably practicable. The reactor fuel will be transported in a container which will conform fully with the regulations governing transport of radioactive material as administered by the Department of Transport.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training trainees are taking part in access courses to higher education as part of their training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to identify the number of employment training (ET) trainees taking part in access courses. Access courses that satisfy normal ET criteria can help to prepare trainees for a variety of employment and training opportunities including higher education.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether claimants who are already undertaking a part-time education or training course under the 21-hour rule may have this course included in their employment training action plan, if they wish to participate in the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Claimants who have undertaken a part-time education or training course under the 21-hour rule may in certain circumstances have the course included in their employment training action plan. In order to be included the course would have to be an integral part of the person's training programme under employment training; be directly relevant to the individual's vocational goal; and agreed as the best method of meeting individual training needs. All other employment training conditions, such as the requirement to complete 30 hours training each week, would continue to apply.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether ET trainees may study for O and A-levels as part of their directed training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes. O-levels or A-levels may help certain trainees to make progress towards their chosen occupation. If so agreed, these qualifications would then be specified as part of directed training within the trainee's action plan.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will estimate from the 1988 labour force survey data *(a)* the numbers of claimants without paid jobs who wanted full-time jobs, *(b)* the number who wanted part-time jobs, and *(c)* the number who had no preference who (i) had not looked for a job in the survey reference week, (ii) had not looked for a job in the last four weeks, (iii) were not available for work within the next two weeks, (iv) (i) and (iii), and (v) (ii) and (iii); and if he will break the estimates down by sex and region;

(2) if he will estimate, using 1988 labour force survey data, the number of male and female claimants without paid work not required to be capable and available for suitable work in spring 1988, and whose main reason for not seeking work in the survey reference week was (i) looking after family/home, (ii) long-term sick/disabled, (iii) believed no jobs available, (iv) retired, (v) temporarily sick, on holiday, awaiting results of job applications or waiting to start a job already obtained, (vi) did not want/need work, (vii) studying, (viii) not yet started looking, (ix) other reason/no reply/not applicable and (x) all reasons;

(3) if he will estimate, using 1988 labour force survey data, the numbers of male and female claimants without paid work who were required to be capable and available for suitable work in spring 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is given in the following table. It is not possible to provide a reliable analysis of these figures by region. The requirement to be capable and available for suitable work does not apply to the labour force survey.

Claimants not in employment, spring 1988: Great Britain

Thousand

	(i) Not looked for work in reference week	*(ii) Not looked for work in last four weeks*	*(iii) Not available to start work*	*(iv) Both (i) and (iii)*	*(v) Both (ii) and (iii)*
All persons					
(a) Would like a full-time job	270	150	60	50	40
(b) Would like a part-time job	110	70	30	20	20
(c) No preference	40	30	10	10	10
Men					
(a) Would like a full-time job	210	120	40	30	20
(b) Would like a part-time job	40	30	10	10	10
(c) No preference	30	20	10	0	0
Women					
(a) Would like a full-time job	60	30	20	10	10

	(i) Not looked for work in reference week	(ii) Not looked for work in last four weeks	(iii) Not available to start work	(iv) Both (i) and (iii)	(v) Both (ii) and (iii)
(b) Would like a part-time job	70	40	20	20	10
(c) No preference	20	10	10	0	0

Notes:
Table excludes people who said they would not like a paid job, or would like work as self-employed.
Figures are rounded to the nearest ten thousand.
Source: Derived with reference to both the claimant count and the 1988 labour force survey.

Noise and Vibration Inspectors

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist noise and vibration inspectors are required by the Health and Safety Executive; and how many are currently in post.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive's factory, agricultural, quarries, explosives and mines inspectorate are responsible for enforcing legislative provision under which exposure to noise and vibration at work is controlled.

In addition, the Health and Safety Executive has 11 specialist inspector posts to provide technical support and advice on noise and vibration. Ten inspectors are in post and a new recruit is expected to start shortly.

Noise Control

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what penalties, in each case, followed the eight prosecutions in the period 1981 to 1989 relating to the control of noise, referred to in his answer of 26 October 1989, *Official Report*, columns *598-99*.

Mr. Nicholls: The following penalties were imposed:

Health and Safety Executive area	*Year*	*Result*	*Fine imposed £*
Scotland West	1981	Dismissed	—
West and North Yorkshire	1983	Guilty	50
West and North Yorkshire	1984	Guilty	1,000
Scotland West	1984	Guilty[1]	—
East Anglia	1987-88	Guilty	500
North East	1987-88	Guilty	600
South Yorkshire and Humberside	1988-89	Guilty[1]	—
West and North Yorkshire	1988-89	Guilty	500

[1] Conditional discharge.

Skills Training Agency, Letchworth

Mr. Ian Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement about the sale of the Letchworth Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar: Further to the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made to the House, *Official Report*, 13 February 1990, column 141, about the sale of the Skills Training Agency (STA), I can announce that we have now accepted a bid from Mr. J. James, an instructor at Letchworth skill centre, for the gas safety training business presently located at one part of the skill centre. Mr. James intends to relocate the business to alternative premises by September 1990.

SCOTLAND

Commonwealth Games

15. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had any discussions with the Scottish Sports Council since the conclusion of the Commonwealth games.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I met Professor Miquel, chairman of the Scottish Sports Council, informally at the Scotland *v.* France rugby international on Saturday 17 February at Murrayfield.

Rents into Mortgages

16. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the progress of the rents into mortgages scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes has received approximately 500 inquiries from tenants interested in purchasing their homes under the Government's rents to mortgages scheme.

Electricity Privatisation

17. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on electricity privatisation as it affects Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The new electricity companies, Scottish Power and Scottish Hydro-Electric, will begin operating at the end of next month, and their flotation will take place, subject to market conditions, in May or June next year.

Motorway Crash Barriers

18. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland are without crash barriers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Only 80 miles are now without central reserve safety barriers. A further 33 miles of safety fencing will be installed this year at a cost of £3·5 million. This demonstrates the high priority we are giving to completing the outstanding work.

Poinding

19. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet Scotland's sheriff principals to discuss the poinding of goods by sheriff officers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There has been no request for any such meeting.

Open Skies Policy

20. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the economic consequences of an open skies policy; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Many of the responses to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport's consultation paper on Scottish lowland airports policy addressed in detail the possible economic effects of an open skies policy. All points have been assessed and are being taken fully into account in the review now being concluded.

35. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the economic consequences of an open skies policy for Glasgow and Renfrewshire; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Many of the responses to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport's consultation paper on Scottish lowland airports policy addressed in detail the possible economic effects of an open skies policy. All points made have been assessed and are being taken fully into account in the review now being concluded.

Fishing Industry

21. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State met representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on 7 February to discuss the management of the North sea haddock fishery in 1990.

European Regional Department Fund

22. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Lang: Awards totalled £857 million between 1975 and 1989. More than 90 per cent. of this came since 1979.

Toxic Waste

23. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from local authorities and environmental groups about the disposal of toxic waste in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A letter from Friends of the Earth (Scotland) was received recently. There have been no other representations during the past six months.

Local Enterprise Companies

24. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many consortia bids have been received by groups wishing to run local enterprise companies in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have received 24 applications from consortia in Scotland wishing to form local enterprise companies.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the tasks of the training standard advisory services in relation to local enterprise companies; and to whom the former body will be accountable.

Mr. Lang: The training standards advisory service, which is at present accountable, through the Training Agency office for Scotland, to the Secretary of State for Employment, will provide advice and an independent assessment of the quality of training provision delivered by each local enterprise company. Under the terms of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill, the training standards advisory service staff in Scotland will become part of Scottish Enterprise, which will be accountable to the Secretary of State for Scotland. Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will wish to consider in due course how best to make provision for the Highlands and Islands area.

Health Services (Private Provision)

25. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health boards have agreed contracts with private companies for the provision of health services to National Health Service patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the number of contracts between health boards and other providers of health services is not kept centrally.

Revenue Support Grant

26. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from rural areas regarding the Government's revenue support grant for 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Six district councils in predominantly rural areas have made general representations about the overall level of their revenue support grant for 1990-91. A number of other authorities, some of them in rural areas, have as is usual raised detailed points, particularly in relation to loan charges and non-domestic rate income, on technical matters relating to the calculation of RSG.

Community Charge

27. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the likely level of average community charge payments in Scotland in 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish local authorities were required to fix their community charges for 1990-91 by 29 January. The average charge (inclusive of the water charge) is £328, which represents an increase of 9·2 per cent. on the comparable figure for the current year.

28. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the overall community charge due in the current year throughout Scotland has now been collected; and what percentage of domestic rates was collected in each of the last five years at the same time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally but it would appear that the general flow of income from community charge payments is broadly the same as under the domestic rating system last year.

46. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have yet to pay the poll tax in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: While no overall figure is available centrally it would appear that the proportion of people in arrears with their community charge payments is broadly the same as under the rating system last year.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the cost to local authorities of the administration and collection of the poll tax in 1989-90; and what was the cost to local authorities of the administration and collection of domestic rates in 1988-89.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The overall cost of administering the community charge system in 1989-90, as estimated by local authorities, is £43·5 million. Community charge collection costs, exclusive of registration work and the operation of the rebate scheme, are estimated to account for £23·3 million of that total.

The overall cost to authorities of administering the rating system in 1988-89 was £31 million, of which £17·3 million was in respect of rates collection. Separate figures are not available centrally for domestic and non-domestic rates.

39. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many individual pieces of communication have been sent in total by regional and island councils in Scotland to poll tax payers in Scotland since the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 came into operation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the administration of the community charge is a matter for levying authorities. The number of communications sent to individuals will vary according to the circumstances of particular cases. However the main statutory communications issued by community charge registration officers and directors of finance are:

1. Inquiry form for completion by responsible person under section 17(5) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
2. Notification of entry in community charges register under section 14(2) of the 1987 Act, as amended by the 1988 Act.
3. Notification of any amendment to or deletion from the community charges register under section 14(5) of the 1987 Act as amended by the 1988 Act.
4. Demand notice in respect of a person's liability for the community charge, under Schedule 2(2) to the 1987 Act.
5. Notices in respect of unpaid community charges, under Schedule 2(4) and 2(7) to the 1987 Act.

Supplementary notices or forms may be issued if the circumstances require this. Additional communications will be sent in the case of people who have applied for community charge rebate.

Storm Damage

29. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce any additional measures he proposes to take to help recompense for the damage caused and the problems associated with recent severe weather conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply today to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

38. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to visit the flood-damaged areas of north Tayside.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to visit north Tayside, but my noble Friend the Minister of State toured the worst affected areas on 15 February.

Scottish Homes

30. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he takes to ensure the effective management of Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has set both broad aims and specific targets for Scottish Homes and agreed with the body its first strategic plan. All of these will be reviewed annually to identify, determine priorities and quantify the action which can be taken on specific fronts. In addition, there is in place a comprehensive framework of documents which set out the parameters within which Scottish Homes may operate, where this is required by section 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Responsibility for the effective internal management of Scottish homes rests with the board and with the chief executive as accounting officer.

Neptune Consortium

31. **Mr Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board's involvement with the Neptune Consortium.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 26 February 1990, (*Official Report*, col. *84-85*). I would like to clarify one point in that reply. Although the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board informed me about various detailed aspects of the development, including the identity of possible large customers earlier this month, as I informed the hon. Member on 26 February, it had informed me in November 1989 of the possibility that it might wish to involve itself in the development at some future date

Scotrail

32. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the general manager of Scotrail; and what subjects were discussed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I discussed various topics relating to rail transport when we met the general manager of Scotrail in the company of the chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid, on 31 October 1989.

CBI

33. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Confederation of British Industry Scotland; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 20 December 1989.

Rating (Debt Collection)

34. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of collecting debts due to default on the payment of domestic rates in 1988-89; and what are the current and projected costs for the collection of poll tax debts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) on 15 January.

Children (Employment)

36. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to assist local authorities in their duty to prevent employers from employing schoolchildren in the early hours for several hours per day before they commence school.

Mr. Lang: Schoolchildren in employment in Scotland are protected by existing legislaton and by local authority byelaws. Enforcement is, in the first instance, a matter for the police.

Private Landlords

37. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to require private sector landlords to reduce bills to tenants to take account of the abolition of domestic rates.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tenants with registered rents are already paying a rent which contains no element for rates; and assured tenants should have a written statement of their liability for rent, exclusive of rates, which is all they need pay. Any regulated tenant who has not had a rent registered need only do so in order to ensure that the rent does not include rates.

Acute Services (Lanarkshire)

40. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received from Lanarkshire health board the report "Acute Services Strategy, Options Appraisal"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The board submitted a consultative document on its acute services strategy on 3 November 1989. The public consultation period ended on 31 January 1990. Once the board has reached a final decision on its preferred option, it will make a submission to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for approval in principle.

Land (Use of Ownership)

41. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department has taken to promote the equitable ownership and use of land in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not the Government's policy to intervene on matters of land ownership. The function of the land use planning system is to regulate the use of land in the interests of economy, efficiency and amenity.

Religious Education

43. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to improve the teaching of Christian-centred religious education in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to issue shortly for consultation a draft circular on religious education in schools.

Equal Opportunities

44. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken to implement an equal opportunities policy in his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: Since 1984 my Department has had a designated equal opportunities officer who, in addition to other duties, has to co-ordinate policy and advise on all aspects of racial and sexual discrimination. A joint management and trade union group has met regularly to take forward the proposals set out in the programme of action on equal opportunities for women in the Civil Service. Progress has been made on all fronts.

The amount of part-time working has increased and a much greater use is made of reinstatement. Staff have been advised of progress through office notices and specially prepared leaflets, and training courses and guidance material now give prominence to the anti-discrimination legislation. My Department is currently considering the case for provision of child care facilities and will shortly apply the recent relaxation of Civil Service rules which allow special unpaid leave for domestic reasons to be granted for up to five years.

Ethnic monitoring of recruitment is undertaken and efforts will continue to increase the ethnic intake to better reflect the proportion in the community. My Department has also undertaken a survey of the ethnic origins of staff as part of the nationwide survey of civil servants. The information is kept up to date by the completion by new entrants to the Department of a questionnaire showing their ethnic origin.

Legal Reforms

45. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has conducted into the effect of the proposed legal reforms on rural practices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 18 January 1990, *Official Report*, column *418*.

Warrant Sales

47. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy in relation to the use of warrant sales for the recovery of poll tax arrears from domestic poll tax taxpayers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the present powers available to local authorities to collect community charge arrears —including, where necessary, the use of warrant sales— are both adequate and appropriate for this purpose.

NHS Staff

48. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take to address the wastage of highly trained staff by Greater Glasgow health board, and to provide employment to the nurses who graduated from Glasgow college in November 1989 and the midwives awarded qualifications by the Eastern college of nursing and midwifery in January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of nurses and midwives completing training in certain areas sometimes exceeds the number of jobs immediately available in the NHS in these areas. This need not imply waste as trained staff are widely required throughout the public and private sectors.

Homelessness

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a table showing the number of applications to local authorities under the homeless legislation for all cases where the household was deemed to be in priority need because of vulnerability due to old age; and if he will provide this information for every available year since 1977 and for each local authority and for Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Rifkind: The homeless persons legislation did not come into effect until 1 April 1978. There are therefore no figures for before that date. The number of applicant households assessed by local authorities as homeless or potentially homeless, and in priority need for reasons which included a person vulnerable because of old age, for the years 1978-79 to 1988-89, are set out in the following table.

Applicant households under the Homeless Persons Legislation assessed by Local Authorities as homeless or potentially homeless and in priority need which include a person vulnerable because of old age
Scotland, by District, 1978-79 to 1988-89

District	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Scotland	545	572	427	644	519	535	552	697	747	613	681
Borders											
Berwickshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1
Ettrick and Lauderdale	—	—	—	—	4	1	—	—	—	—	—
Roxburgh	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	1
Tweeddale	6	4	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	[1]—	[1]—
Central											
Clackmannan	11	16	14	14	17	17	14	22	7	11	6
Falkirk	3	1	1	—	1	1	9	32	50	32	28
Stirling	7	6	6	5	21	22	17	2	16	16	12
Dumfries and Galloway											
Annandale and Eskdale	1	8	4	12	5	10	2	—	5	4	7
Nithsdale	14	9	2	9	5	5	3	6	13	5	17
Stewartry	1	7	4	6	5	8	12	7	7	10	10
Wigtown	5	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	2
Fife											
Dunfermline	22	8	10	11	16	13	13	14	32	20	15
Kirkcaldy	13	4	4	11	3	6	8	16	14	17	23
North East Fife	4	3	6	6	6	7	13	18	14	20	24
Grampian											
Aberdeen	21	13	10	19	22	25	31	62	34	39	63
Banff and Buchan	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	5	2	1	2
Gordon	1	1	4	1	1	2	5	3	3	7	14
Kincardine and Deeside	—	2	—	2	—	2	—	1	2	—	2
Moray	5	5	9	9	8	7	11	13	12	4	12
Highland											
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Caithness	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inverness	6	12	5	18	13	24	13	9	9	7	7
Lochaber	1	1	1	—	2	—	4	1	2	2	2
Nairn	1	4	2	1	1	—	—	—	2	—	1
Ross and Cromarty	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
Skye and Lochalsh	—	1	1	2	2	4	5	3	3	3	4
Sutherland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian											
East Lothian	3	4	4	14	15	13	17	21	32	9	20
Edinburgh	24	30	31	23	26	18	25	32	57	38	52
Midlothian	2	4	1	44	1	2	—	—	—	6	2
West Lothian	5	6	—	16	3	3	2	4	1	3	3
Strathclyde											
Argyll and Bute	19	16	7	10	12	11	13	13	16	10	7
Bearsden and Milngavie	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	5	5	1
Clydebank	1	—	3	3	5	1	12	11	10	19	18
Clydesdale	9	8	1	3	3	—	—	3	4	13	7
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2	2	7	7	6	—	20	19	10	3	11
Cumnock and Doon Valley	—	—	—	1	2	1	—	1	1	2	1

District	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Cunninghame	20	14	13	8	16	11	12	13	10	10	5
Dumbarton	5	16	13	5	11	5	15	23	26	28	24
East Kilbride	10	5	8	14	9	13	5	15	7	5	8
Eastwood	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Glasgow	103	163	123	104	145	131	101	125	130	90	112
Hamilton	20	31	12	86	9	11	13	19	10	11	13
Inverclyde	4	10	10	30	13	11	18	14	28	18	13
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2	2	3	4	1	4	7	11	7	—	13
Kyle and Carrick	36	20	15	24	20	24	46	28	25	25	28
Monklands	16	9	5	12	6	6	4	7	12	10	5
Motherwell	14	12	13	21	14	30	10	12	15	10	8
Renfrew	53	34	7	8	9	20	8	17	7	13	4
Strathkelvin	5	12	23	32	15	16	9	5	13	7	13
Tayside											
Angus	11	12	10	8	6	6	8	6	10	18	11
Dundee	14	4	2	3	1	4	5	23	15	10	7
Perth and Kinross	30	34	23	35	33	26	34	53	55	46	34
Orkney Islands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	[1]—	[1]—
Shetland Islands	3	6	—	—	2	2	2	1	5	2	2
Western Isles	12	8	4	6	3	2	3	1	5	2	2

[1] Not available.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homeless children there are in *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not collected centrally.

Higher Education

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies have recently been carried out by his Department on higher education students annual and monthly expenditure on *(a)* accommodation, *(b)* food, *(c)* transport and *(d)* other necessary items in (i) Glasgow, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No separate Scottish studies have been undertaken, but a survey of students' income and expenditure covering Great Britain as a whole was commissioned in 1989. The results of the study provided benchmark information on the financial position of students during the 1988-89 academic year. The report of the survey, by Research Services Ltd., was published in November 1989 and copies have been placed in the Library.

Schools (Self-Government)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any organisations seeking to encourage schools to opt out of the local authority education system have applied for any financial assistance from his Department.

Mr. Lang: No.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to establish a Scottish self-governing schools trust; what meetings have so far been held to this effect; and who has been involved in the discussions.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Cash Limits

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make further changes to the cash limits for 1989-90 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 27, Hospital and Community Health Services, Scotland, will be increased by £16,237,000 from £8,697,000 to £24,934,000 to take account of increased expenditure by health boards. This increase will be partially offset by savings of £4,500,000 elsewhere within the Scottish block. The balance will be charged to the reserve.

Training Schemes

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how standards of quality are maintained on the employment training scheme and YTS in Scotland; and what comparable studies he has made of major European competitors in their provision of training.

Mr. Lang: The Training Agency ensures standards of quality on employment training and YTS by requiring all employment training training agents and managers and YTS managers to become approved training organisations. In awarding approved training organisation status, the Training Agency verifies the design and delivery of the training as consistent with the aims of employment training and YTS. Furthermore the training standards advisory service provides an independent advisory service which has as its main role to assess the overall quality of training provision and to undertake evaluations of individual projects.

There is a lack of internationally comparable data on training volumes and expenditure. National surveys have been carried out in most countries, but their coverage and the definitions used often differ widely. The Scottish Office itself has made no study of provision of training in major European countries, but "Training in Britain", a report produced by the Training Agency, does make reference to training in France and Germany. In addition, a study is presently being carried out by the European centre for the

development of vocational training and the Commission of European Communities to obtain systematic and comparable data of training expenditure at the European level, but results are not yet available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to publish the recent survey of training within the tourism sector undertaken by the Scottish tourist board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No decision has yet been taken. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the procedures by which the employment training scheme is monitored by his Department in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The monitoring of employment training in Scotland is undertaken by the Training Agency which is at present part of the Department of Employment. My officials in the Industry Department for Scotland liaise closely with the Training Agency on employment training issues.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the terms of his loan to fund Lothian health board's deficit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Subject to the approval of Parliament, I am providing additional resources to enable Lothian to meet the overspend of its 1989-90 cash limit. This is a short term measure which will add to the board's cumulative deficit in 1990-91. I have asked the board to prepare proposals designed to bring its underlying income and expenditure into balance in the medium term. In the light of the decisions on the board's proposals I will consider with the board the management of its cumulative deficit.

Dounreay

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make an announcement concerning the application by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to drill two boreholes at Dounreay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This planning application is the subject of an appeal which is currently before my right hon. and learned Friend for decision. I expect that his decision on the matter will be issued shortly.

Housing

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has received from Councillor Gordon Murray of Cumbernauld concerning housing modernisation and improvements in the Balloch, Ravenswood, Seafar North and Carbrain East areas of Cumbernauld new town; if he will place a copy of his response in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During my visit to Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council on 16 February, Councillor Murray gave me a letter about the distribution of resources for housing projects within the district. I do not consider it appropriate for me to place a copy of Councillor Murray's letter in the Library, or a copy of the reply.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria his Department applies to district councils seeking grants for housing modernisation and improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department does not give grants to district councils for this purpose. Capital allocations for local authorities' housing capital programmes are determined each year, within the aggregate public expenditure resources that can be made available, on the basis of the relative needs of individual authorities.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent advice his Department has given to district councils on the allocation of grants for having modernisation and improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department issued a circular to local authorities on 16 January advising them of an amendment to the scheme of assistance for eligible owners of houses designed as defective under part XIV of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. The Department also issued a circular on 14 June 1989 concerning the preparation of housing plans by authorities and the relationship of these to capital programmes.

Radon Gas

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on levels of radon gas in the Aberdeen area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Measurements of radon gas levels in homes in the Grampian region have been carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB). The average value found in a representative sample is 16 Bq m^{-3} (becquerel per cubic metre of air). In Aberdeen city and in parts of Kincardine and Deeside district, additional measurements were made. The average for Aberdeen city is 18 Bq m^{-3} and the average for Kincardine and Deeside is 105 Bq m^{-3}. These values are to be compared with the average for the whole of the United Kingdom of about 20 Bq m^{-3}. The NRPB estimates that between 0·3 per cent. and 1·0 per cent. of homes in the Grampian region will exceed the new action level of 200 Bq m^{-3} advised by the NRPB.

The NRPB, on behalf of the Scottish Office, is carrying out further measurements in those areas where high levels have been discovered. These measurements are expected to be completed by the end of the year. In the meantime, the Government will continue to offer free radon measurements by the NRPB, available on demand to any householder in an area with potential for high radon levels. Also, grants continue to be available, through the present improvement grant system for any remedial action which may be necessary.

Innerclyde Enterprise Zone

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library an explanatory note and any other relevant documents setting out the terms on which the Commission of the European Communities approved the designation of the Inverclyde enterprise zone.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* In accordance with usual procedures, the Government's intention to create a new enterprise zone in Inverclyde and the European Commission's decision to raise no objection to the proposed measure were dealt with in an exchange of letters between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Commission of the European Communities. It is not normal practice to publish such correspondence. The Commission's approval was subject to the standard terms and conditions regarding observance of the Community rules and regulations applicable to such measures.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 1 March 1990

NATIONAL FINANCE

Roads (Ireland)

54. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the list of approved and unapproved roads between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Ryder: The list of routes approved for traffic with the Republic of Ireland is being reviewed by Customs and Excise at the present time. This is linked to the introduction of computer-assisted processing of customs declarations.

Child Benefit

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what proportion of those families with children will receive more in child benefit than they pay out in income tax in the current financial year.

Mr. Lilley: In 1989-90, an estimated 2·3 million families will receive more in child benefit than they pay in income tax. This represents about a third of all families with children. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987 family expenditure survey and are subject to revision.

Corporation Taxes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total take for corporation taxes as a percentage of gross domestic product, and of company incomes for each year from 1979-80, including his estimate of the outturn for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The available information is as follows:

Year	*Corporation tax*[1] *as a proportion of*	
	Gross domestic product[2] *Percentage*	*Company incomes*[3] *Percentage*
1979-80	2·3	11·7
1980-81	2·0	12·0
1981-82	1·9	11·7
1982-83	2·0	12·2
1983-84	1·9	10·5
1984-85	2·5	12·5
1985-86	2·9	14·1
1986-87	3·5	18·6
1987-88	3·7	17·7
1988-89	4·0	18·4

[1] Mainstream plus Advance Corporation tax, Excluding Public Corporations.
[2] At Market Prices, calendar year.
[3] Total company income in the calendar year as defined in the national accounts, net of interest payments.

Reliable estimates for the current year are not yet available.

Mortgages

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the median mortgage for residential property in each year since 1970 and the ratio of that median to the median annual earnings of the full-time adult male manual and non-manual worker, respectively.

Mr. Ryder: Information for 1978 to 1988 on median mortgages issued by building societies on residential property is published by the DOE in "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988", table 10.13. Tables 10.20 and 10.22 in the same publication contain information on the size distribution of bank and insurance company mortgages respectively, from which medians may be calculated. Earlier information for building society mortgages only is contained in previous editions of "Housing and Construction Statistics". Median gross weekly earnings in April of each year for full-time adult male manual and non-manual employees are published by the Department of Employment in table 15, part A, of the new earnings survey reports. Figures for 1970 to 1978 can be found in the 1978 report and for 1979 to 1989 in the 1989 report.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year from 1970 his estimate of the number of mortgages for residential property together with *(a)* the average amount of mortgage, *(b)* average earnings of full-time adult male manual and non-manual workers, respectively, *(c)* average earnings of full-time adult female manual and non-manual workers, respectively, and *(d)* the number of workers in *(b)* and *(c)*.

Mr. Ryder: Information on numbers of mortgage advances on residential property and average advances is published by the DOE in "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988", table 10.4. Information for years previous to 1978 is available for building societies only in previous editions of "Housing and Construction Statistics". Average gross weekly earnings in April of each year for full-time adult male and female manual and non-manual employees are published by the Department of Employment in table 15, part A of the new earnings survey reports. Figures for 1970 to 1978 can be found in the 1978 report and for 1979 to 1989 in the 1989 report. Disaggregated data on employment are published in the *Employment Gazette*, December 1989, table 1.10, and in previous editions of the *Gazette*.

Conveyancing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing for each year from 1970 the number of conveyances of residential property, the average value, and the ratio of that value to median earnings of *(a)* all full-time adult male workers and *(b)* all full-time adult male manual workers.

Mr. Lilley: Annual information on the numbers and value of conveyances in England and Wales is not available for years prior to 1986. Figures for 1986 to 1988 are available in table 15.1 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989". Figures for the average price of dwellings purchased with a building society mortgage can be found

in table 105 of the 1969-79 and table 10.11 of the 1978-88 editions of "Housing and Construction Statistics". Median earnings figures can be found in section 6 of the 1977, 1986 and 1990 editions of "Annual Abstract of Statistics".

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing for 1978 and 1983 the number of conveyances of residential property in each region, the average value, and the ratio of that value to median earnings of all full-time adult male workers.

Mr. Lilley: Annual information on the numbers and value of conveyances in England and Wales is not available for years prior to 1986.

Figures for the average price by region of dwellings purchased with a building society mortgage can be found at table 10.11 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1977-1987". Median earnings figures by region within Great Britain can be found at table 116 of part E of the 1978 and 1983 editions of the new earnings survey.

Rateable Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the average rateable value of the highest and lowest 5 per cent. of rated dwellings.

Mr. Lilley: This information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for England and Wales the total rateable values of residential property at the time of the last revaluation together with the estimated capital value; and whether he will provide in each case the proportion accounted for by the half with the lowest values.

Mr. Lilley: As the book "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989" shows, the total rateable value of residential property in England and Wales at 1 April 1973 is £4,032 million. The information on capital value is contained in the book "UK National Accounts 1989." The other information could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the highest and lowest 5 per cent. of gross incomes the percentage of gross incomes paid in income tax and national insurance contributions in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1988-89 and *(c)* 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: Information is given in the table; estimates are based on the distributions in 1978-79, 1988-89 and 1989-90 of the gross earnings and investment income of married couples and single people aged under 65 who would be liable to pay income tax or national insurance contributions. The estimates for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Married Couples and Single People Aged Under 65 Liable to Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions Ranged by Gross Income

Distribution by Gross Income	*Proportion of Gross Income paid in income tax and NIC*		
	1978-79 per cent.	*1988-89 per cent.*	*1989-90 per cent.*
Lowest 5 per cent. [1]	9	6	5
Highest 5 per cent. [1]	34	29	29

[1] The lowest/highest 5 per cent. each contain *(a)* 970,000 married couples and single people in 1978-79, *(b)* 990,000 in 1988-89, and *(c)* 1 million in 1989-90.

Independent Taxation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many households will gain as a result of the proposals for independent taxation; how many could potentially gain because of the ability of husband and wife to swap investment income; and what is the income distribution of these households;

(2) how many households will pay less in taxation as a proportion of household income as a result of the introduction of independent taxation; and what is *(a)* the income distribution and *(b)* the regional distribution of these households.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Available information is given in the table. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Independent Taxation 1990-91

Total income of married couple £'000	*Married couples*[1] '000	*Married couples*[2] '000
0-5	—	—
5-10	370	210
10-15	510	530
15-20	390	620
20-25	220	400
25-30	160	280
Over 30	1,350	940
All ranges	3,000	2,980

[1] With reduction in income tax liability. Makes no allowance for possible behavioural changes and the effect on Capital Gains Tax receipts.

[2] Who could reduce their income tax liability by transferring income bearing assets from husband to wife or vice versa.

I regret that information on the regional distribution of gainers is not available.

Privatisation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sale price received and the net asset value of each public undertaking sold since 1980.

Mr. Peter Lilley *[pursuant to his reply, 23 February 1990, c. 963]:* I regret that the table relating to my answer was omitted; it is as follows:

£ million

Company[1]	Date of privatisation	Gross proceeds from sale	Net asset value at privatisation[2]
British Aerospace	1981	[3]150	296
	1985	[4]551	445
Cable and Wireless	1981	[5]224	152
	1983	275	117
	1985	933	166
Amersham International	1982	[6]71	28
National Freight Consortium	1982	[7]53·5	45·3
Britoil	1982	549	113
	1985	449	234
Associated British Ports	1983	22	73
	1984	52	77
Enterprise Oil	1984	392	117
British Telecom	1984	3,916	3,007
British Gas	1986	5,434	5,181
British Airways	1987	900	619
Royal Ordnance	1987	190	227
Rolls-Royce	1987	1,363	789
BAA	1987	1,281	694
British Petroleum	1983	566	638
(residual sale)	1987	[8]7,240	3,199
National Seed Development Organisation	1987	27	15·4
Professional and Executive Recruitment	1988	6	1·2
Rover Group	1988	[9]150	[10]881
British Steel	1988	2,500	3,594
General Practice Finance Corporation	1989	15·7	5·6
Shorts	1989	30	30
Harland and Wolff	1989	6	6

[1] Excluding sales of subsidiaries by Nationalised Industries.
[2] Historic cost basis. For sales of less than 100 per cent. the net asset value for the proportion sold has been given.
[3] £50m to HMG.
[4] £363m to HMG.
[5] £189m to HMG.
[6] £65m to HMG.
[7] Net £6·5m after Government funding of pension liabilities.
[8] £5,725m to HMG.
[9] To be received by 30 March 1990.
[10] Includes Government cash injection of £547m.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Malicious Communications

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what criteria the Crown prosecution service follows when deciding whether to bring a prosecution under the Malicious Communications Act; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The criteria which the Crown prosecution service follows when deciding whether to prosecute any offence, including any under this Act, are set out in the code for Crown prosecutors promulgated under section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. These are that there is sufficient admissible, substantial and reliable evidence to afford a realistic prospect of a conviction and that the public interest requires a prosecution.

Authorised Practitioners

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General what will be the extra manpower involved in carrying out the new responsibilities proposed in the Courts and Legal Services Bill in respect of authorised practitioners; and what is the anticipated extra financial cost.

The Attorney-General: The annual cost of the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board, the conveyancing ombudsman and the conveyancing appeal tribunals is anticipated to be approximately £0·9 million in its first full year. The secretariats and support staff will require about 15 staff and the board itself, the ombudsman and the tribunal members will total a maximum of 13 individuals. It is intended that the board, the ombudsman and their secretariats should be self-financing and that any initial Government funding should decrease as quickly as possible. It is not possible, however, to estimate at this stage how much of any Government grant might be recouped from fees.

Director of Public Prosecutions

Mr. Hind: To ask the Attorney-General if he has any plans to meet the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I frequently meet the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss matters of departmental interest. Such meetings are arranged as and when necessary.

House of Fraser

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Attorney-General whether the criminal investigation into matters raised by the report by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors into the House of Fraser has been concluded; and when he expects the Serious Fraud Office to reach a decision on prosecution.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions and the director of the Serious Fraud Office have today issued the following statement:

"The Report of the Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Director of the Serious Fraud Office on 14th July 1988. After careful consideration of the Report and the accompanying evidence, the Directors jointly referred the matter to the Metropolitan Police on 24th November 1988 and asked for necessary enquiries to be carried out. Following the request of the Directors, the Secretary of State witheld publication of the Report.

The Directors are now satisfied that all lines of enquiry have been pursued and that the evidence available is insufficient to afford a realistic prospect of conviction for any criminal offence relating to any matter of substance raised in the Report.

The Secretary of State has accordingly been informed that the Directors withdraw their objections to the publication of the Inspectors' Report."

HOME DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Court, Crawley

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to build a new magistrates court in Crawley.

Mr. John Patten: West Sussex county council has sought Home Office grant approval for the extension of Crawley magistrates courthouse to provide an additional courtroom. The council has not yet submitted a first stage investment appraisal, and will need to do so before a building start date can be considered.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each category of parliamentary questions which it is his policy not to answer.

Mr. Waddington: Of those questions not transferred, none.

Violent Crime (Compensation)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the nations that have signed the European convention on reciprocal compensation for victims of violent crime, and give details of the representations that have been made to those European nations which have not yet signed the convention.

Mr. John Patten: The Council of Europe convention on the compensation of victims of violent crimes, which lays down minimum standards for national arrangements for payment of compensation, was signed by the United Kingdom when it was opened for signature on 24 November 1983. The other signatory states are Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Turkey.

The convention came into force on 1 February 1988. On 7 February 1990, we joined Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden as contracting states. The convention will come into force in relation to the United Kingdom on 1 June 1990, and we shall take every opportunity to encourage other countries to adopt it.

There have been various calls in both the Council of Europe and the European Community for states to sign and ratify this convention.

Prison Service

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Oxford, East on 19 February, *Official Report*, column 595, what was the cost of the contract awarded to the PA Consulting Group for its review of the prison service organisation above establishment level from its commencement until the end of its first extension in December 1989.

Mr. Mellor: The projected price of the contract was £271,230, and £255,740 has been paid to date. Both sums include VAT.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the role of the PA Consulting Group on the studies which led to changes in working practices in prison establishments, known as "fresh start"; and what was the cost of their work.

Mr. Mellor: PA Management Consultants were engaged by the prison service in September 1985 to assist in studies of complementing in prisons and of the shift systems worked by prison officers. PA's role was limited to that of bringing to bear knowledge and skills, for example in the complex area of adapting shift arrangements to the grouping of work arrangements which, at the time, were unavailable within the Home Office to the extent required by the exercise.

As part of this work, PA advised the prison service on the development of its "fresh start" proposals, which were put to prison service unions in February 1987, although they took no part in the subsequent negotiations. PA consultants also provided advice on the implementation of the proposals, including development work and training, and they assisted in the running of an evaluation of "fresh start" during November 1987. Their further assistance was used in the drawing up and implementation of an action plan, based on the evaluation, to ensure the development and establishment of best practice across all prison establishments.

The total cost of PA's services for work undertaken over a four-year period in respect of "fresh start" was £948,720·90. This amount includes expenses and VAT as well as fees.

Young Offenders

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of males under the age of 17 years appearing before the courts in England and Wales during 1988;

(2) what was the total number of males under the age of 17 years who appeared in courts in Wales during 1988.

Mr. John Patten: In 1988 in England and Wales, 43,600 males under the age of 17 were prosecuted for indictable offences, of whom 3,300 appeared before the Welsh courts.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of males under the age of 17 years who were remanded into prisons and remand centres in England and Wales during 1988.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of males aged 14 to 16 received on remand into prison service establishments in England and Wales is published

annually in "Prison statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.6 of the latest volume, for 1988, Cm 825) copies of which are in the Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to reply to the letter of 13 June 1989, and the reminders of 14 September 1989, 25 October 1989 and 21 December 1989, from the hon. Member for Livingston on behalf of his constituent Mr. Wali Mohammed, his reference M294411.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wrote to the hon. Member on 27 February.

HGVs (Roadside Checks)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces co-operate with local authority trading standards officers or environmental health officers in roadside checks of heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All police forces participate in roadside checks of heavy goods vehicles where resources permit, and, where appropriate, roadside check sites are available.

Terrorist Suspects (Interviews)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the tape recording of interviews with suspected terrorists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Tape recording of summaries of interviews with suspected terrorists, and of their comments on the summary, is to be introduced on an experimental basis by the Metropolitan and Merseyside police from Monday 5 March. The experiment will run for two years and will be monitored by the research and planning unit of the Home Office, reporting to a steering committee which includes representatives of the police, the Crown prosecution service, the Criminal Bar Association and the Law Society. I have placed a copy of the relevant notes of guidance in the Library.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Unions

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will take steps to improve communications with the Civil Service unions.

Mr. Luce: I believe that in general the present arrangements for communications with the Civil Service unions work well.

ENERGY

Atomic Energy Development (Files)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he requested that any files relating to atomic energy development should be withheld from release on 1 January under sections 3(4) and 5(1) of the Public Records Act 1958.

Mr. Baldry: In accordance with established criteria, my Department has requested that certain files in the category referred to by the hon. Member should be withheld. It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to disclose the contents of records which are so withheld from public release.

Reactor Projects

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on current United Kingdom involvement in, and future financial commitment to *(a)* the international thermonuclear experimental reactor, *(b)* the next European Torus and *(c)* the compact ignition Tokamak fusion reactor projects.

Mr. Baldry: The proposed new framework programme for Community research and development for the period 1990-94 includes provision for continuing work on a "next step" fusion reactor. The international thermonuclear experimental reactor is the subject of collaboration in conceptual design between Euratom, Japan, the USA and the USSR which is due to be completed at the end of 1990. The United Kingdom is involved only through Euratom.

The design of the next European Torus is being defined by a small team based at Garching in Germany. The UKAEA is a party to the agreement setting up the team and makes a modest contribution by providing staff. Extension of either project to engineering design would require a further decision by the Council of Ministers.

I understand that the compact ignition Tokamak fusion reactor is a United States project in which the United Kingdom is not involved.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he is reviewing his policy on the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation to 12 GW of coal-burning electricity generating capacity;

(2) if he will make it his policy to deal with coal-burning power station emission problems by means of combustion process controls as distinct from importing low-sulphur content coal;

(3) what effect he envisages on the make-up of British Coal, after the current three-year contract with the principal generators, if flue gas desulphurisation proceeds only at the 4 GW Drax project.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are determined to implement in full the EC large combustion plants directive. This directive commits the United Kingdom to reduce its emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from existing plants, such as fossil-fuelled power stations, but does not specify the means by which this has to be done. It is for the electricity industry to plan how it will achieve its share of these reductions. The fitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment will play an important part. Other measures, such as the burning of low-sulphur fuels, including gas, are also likely to contribute.

The scale of future purchases of British coal by the generators will be a matter for their commercial judgment. The best protection for the United Kingdom coal industry would be for it to produce secure supplies of coal at competitive prices.

Low-sulphur Coal

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to consider the sustainability of supplies, long-term price, and balance of payments effects of low-sulphur coal as part of a review of his Department's policy on coal-burning power stations.

Mr. Baldry: The source and cost of low-sulphur coal is a matter for the electricity generation industry.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what forecasts he has made of the long-term effects on British Coal *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the east midlands region, of a policy of importing low-sulphur content coal.

Mr. Baldry: None. Such forecasts are a commercial matter for the British Coal Corporation.

Oil Imports

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the proportion of oil imports to the United Kingdom used *(a)* in the manufacture of automobiles, buses and road haulage vehicles and *(b)* for fuelling road transport.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is not available.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when flotation of National Power and PowerGen will take place.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Erewash (Mr. Rost) and for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 28 February 1990 at column *226*.

United Kingdom Petroleum Production

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the Government's latest forecasts of levels of United Kingdom petroleum production.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest forecasts for United Kingdom petroleum production in the years 1990 to 1994 are as follows:

	Million tonnes
1990	85-110
1991	80-110
1992	80-110
1993	85-115
1994	80-120

As in previous years, the forecasts are presented in the form of a range of outcomes for each year. These take into account the many uncertainties involved. The figures comprise stabilised crude oil, natural gas liquids and condensates. NGL and condensate production is expected to contribute between 5 and 10 million tonnes annually to the above.

PRIME MINISTER

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Q40. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister which of the conditions which were agreed at the Madrid meeting of the European Council as a basis for the United Kingdom joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system have not yet been met; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: There has been significant progress on capital liberalisation, in competition policy and liberalisation of financial services, but further important decisions have yet to be taken. Further progress is needed to get inflation down.

German Unification

Q84. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has held recent discussions with *(a)* Chancellor Kohl and *(b)* other European Community state leaders on the subject of the unification of the two German states.

The Prime Minister: I last met Chancellor Kohl at the European Council in Strasbourg in December. Other EC Heads of State or Government were also present. We had a useful discussion of the question of German unity. This was reflected in the Council's declaration.

Walderslade, Chatham

Q.116 **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Walderslade, Chatham.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Q.125 **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for St. David's day.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 1 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had a meeting with the President of the European Parliament and presided at a meeting of the Cabinet. I also had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Environment

Q.142 **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on environmental issues.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received very many positive representations, particularly in relation to the proposals in the Environment Protection Bill.

Confederation of British Wool Textiles

Q.164 **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to the Confederation of British Wool Textiles office in Bradford.

The Prime Minister: I visited a textile mill during my regional tour to Bradford yesterday and was most impressed by the quality and enthusiasm of the staff and the excellence of the products.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the programme for establishing the single market; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the trade which certain members of the Community have secured during the period of agreed European Economic Community sanctions; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Community has trade sanctions in place against South Africa only. Beyond the very limited scope of these, it is for individual member states to pursue trading relationships with South Africa as they see fit.

Policy Unit Staff

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the professional background of those joining her policy unit since 1979.

The Prime Minister: Those joining my policy unit since 1979 have had a variety of experience in a range of professions including:

Accountancy
Administration
Banking
Business management
Company directorship
Economics
Engineering
Finance
Industry
Investment analysis
Journalism.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to establish a ministerial working group to study the problems of coastal protection and sea defences and to co-ordinate the work of the various Departments concerned.

The Prime Minister: The policy responsibility for coast protection and sea defence rests, in England, with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and elsewhere with the territorial Departments. There may be direct or indirect implications for other concerns but such co-ordination as may be necessary is already carried out with the relevant Departments.

Office Running Costs

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will detail the reasons for the increase in the costs of running her office from £6·55 million in 1988 to £7·9 million in 1989; and what steps she is taking to reduce this increase.

The Prime Minister: The estimated increase in costs is due almost entirely to capital expenditure on refurbishment work and security improvements. The increase in the normal running costs of my office is less than one half of one percentage point in real terms.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to ensure the security and non-infiltration of the Ernie draw by unauthorised persons.

The Prime Minister: All payments of premium bond prizes are made to winning investors, selected at random. The relevant accounts are audited by the National Audit Office, and the Department for National Savings is satisfied that there is no scope for abuse of the system.

TRANSPORT

A31, West Moors

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long it will take to intall safety fencing along the A31 trunk road at West Moors between Pinehurst roundabout and Boundary lane; and what are the reasons for the time taken.

Mr. Atkins: The work will take about three months. This is because of the need for carriageway works to enable the central reserve to be widened to accommodate the 850m long safety fence without interfering with statutory undertakers' services.

Traffic (London)

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many communications he had received at the close of 28 February of consultation on traffic in London and the London road assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It will take a little while to collate and analyse the responses received. We shall make a statement as soon as possible.

A41, Apex Corner

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects the road works on the A41 at Apex corner, where the turning into Mount grove has been closed, to be completed; and if he will take steps to ensure that, once the central gap has been reopened, it will remain open on permanent basis.

Mr. Atkins: The works are expected to be completed in spring 1991. The right turn into Mount grove will then be restored. There are no plans to close it permanently. I shall continue to have regard to the safety of the trunk road network and will take appropriate safety measures wherever they are shown to be necessary.

"A Change in the Air"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will obtain a copy of the transcript and video cassette of the television programme "A Change In The Air", on transport pollution, broadcast on 25 February, for his departmental library.

Mr. Atkins: We have already ordered the video. We do not need the transcript as well.

Channel Ferries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review transport safety conditions and emergency rescue plans for cross-Channel ferries carrying toxic chemicals and spent nuclear fuel unable to dock in channel ports due to storms during the past month.

Mr. McLoughlin: Ships which carry dangerous goods conform to the international maritime regulations regarding construction, equipment and manning, and are capable of riding out storms of the type recently experienced in the English Channel. It is the decision of the ship's master whether or not to leave port.

Contingency arrangements already exist to deal with pollution arising from chemical spillages, or to recover irradiated fuel flasks from the seabed.

Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives he has taken to inform the public of the various transport options available with regard to their comparative pollution effects.

Mr. Atkins: My Department publishes annually in "Transport Statistics Great Britain" trends in emissions of pollutants from different transport modes. Pollution emitted by road vehicles is related to fuel consumption. My Department regularly issues a booklet about the fuel consumption of new cars which also advises motorists on how to save fuel when driving. It is generally well known that pollution may be reduced if people use public transport instead of private cars.

M1 (Congestion)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute a service advising motorists of those times on each day of the week that they can drive in either direction between junctions 6 and 12 of the M1 without being subjected to delays through congestion; and if he will make it his policy to update this advice each time a significant roadwork is commenced or completed and in any event once every three months.

Mr. Atkins: The Department regards the provision of travel information as extremely important, and is considering with interested organisations ways of improving the reliability and availability of information through better arrangements for its collection, co-ordination and dissemination.

Congestion on the M1 between junctions 6 and 12 occurs more commonly during peak periods, of which the travelling public is generally aware. It can also arise for a number of unforeseen reasons, for example after an accident. The police, the media and motoring organisations provide an important service in disseminating news about congestion when it occurs.

Information is already made widely available when roadworks are in prospect, in operation or about to finish. Only on Tuesday I gave a press conference about works due to commence on both the M1 and M25 in Hertfordshire. I am concerned that drivers should receive more information about delays and the reasons for them. With this in mind, new signs are being displayed in advance of roadworks advising drivers of the work being undertaken.

Hackney Cabs

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to reform the hackney cab knowledge test outside London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Outside London, district councils are the licensing authorities for hackney carriages. It is a matter for them whether to require prospective hackney carriage drivers to undertake a geographical knowledge test for the area in which a licence would apply. The Government have no plans to propose the removal of that discretionary power.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hungary

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Hungary.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is currently in Hungary. He arrived on 27 February and will leave on 1 March. He will be holding talks with Dr. Horn, the Foreign Minister, and other members of the Government, and will be meeting representatives of the major opposition parties.

South Africa (Sanctions)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* submissions have been received and *(b)* meetings have been organised with Government representatives from each Commonwealth country since August 1989 on the subject of trade sanctions and South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: There were wide-ranging talks on South Africa at CHOGM in October 1989. Since then, there has been discussion of South Africa at both official and ministerial level as part of our normal contacts with Commonwealth Governments.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the procedures adopted by the European Economic Community to ensure that Community sanctions legislation relating to South Africa is adhered to by member states.

Mr. Waldegrave: As with any legislation adopted by the EEC, the Commission has the duty under the treaty to ensure that it is enforced and applied by member states.

Angola

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to enforce the ceasefire agreed last year between the warring parties in Angola.

Mr. Waldegrave: The terms of any settlement of the dispute in Angola are for the MPLA Government of Angola and UNITA to decide. We have consistently stressed to both sides the need for an early ceasefire and negotiations without preconditions, and we support President Mobutu's work as mediator.

Ethiopia

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the civil war in Ethiopia.

Mr. Waldegrave: After a long lull in the fighting in Eritrea, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front launched a major offensive on 8 February. The fighting is still going on, but it appears that the port of Massawa is in EPLF hands. In their statement of 20 February, the Twelve expressed deep concern about the implications of the renewed fighting for the famine relief operations which are urgently required, and for the prospects for peace negotiations.

South Africa

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the Government of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We maintain regular contact with the South African authorities on a wide range of issues, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to the provision of funds to the African National Congress and other political parties in South Africa to assist with the development of democracy.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a case for practical assistance to those in South Africa who have previously been excluded from the political process. We are considering what practical help we can give in a non-discriminatory way.

Arms Reductions

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the position of the Bush Administration on the exclusion of certain air-launched missiles from the strategic arms reduction talks negotiations.

Mr. Waldegrave: Both the United States and the Soviet Union take the view that since these negotiations concern only strategic weapons, air-launched cruise missiles below a certain range should be excluded. The difference is that the Soviet Union want all such missiles with ranges of more than 600 km to be accountable, while the United States wants a higher range threshold.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government support the position of the Bush Administration on exclusion of air-launched missiles with a range of less than 1,500 km from the strategic arms reduction talks negotiations.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United States and the Soviet Union have not yet agreed on the range at which strategic nuclear air-launched cruise missiles would become accountable under a START agreement. The START negotiations are between the United States and Soviet Union, and it is for them to reach an understanding on this issue.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the position of the Bush Administration on exclusion of air-launched missiles with a range of less than 1,500 km from the strategic arms reduction talks negotiations has been discussed in any official NATO meeting.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United States regularly briefs its allies at official NATO meetings on progress in the strategic arms reduction talks, including the situation regarding air-launched cruise missiles.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in his Department are currently allocated to work on nuclear non-proliferation; and if he has any plans to increase the departmental commitment to this work.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are 11 members of this Department working full-time on nuclear non-proliferation, including missile proliferation. In addition, there are a number of staff, both home-based and at posts abroad, who contribute to this work. There are no plans at present to increase the number of staff devoted to this issue.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to disseminate information to schools, colleges, universities, non-governmental organisations and other interested parties on the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: The arms control and disarmament research unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office publishes notes on arms control on an approximately monthly basis, and a quarterly review. Both documents are circulated to a wide range of educational establishments and other organisations on request. Information about the non-proliferation treaty and the fourth review conference is regularly included.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent visit to Czechoslovakia, the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), or his accompanying officials raised the forthcoming fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with his hosts.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of any improvement or deterioration in the human rights situation in East Timor in recent years.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have received diplomatic and other reports which confirm that there has been a sustained improvement in respect for human rights in East Timor in recent years. We have received reports of incidents which give rise to concern during the second half of 1989. We are watching the situation closely.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received concerning the execution of four people who had been in detention for over 24 years in Jakarta on 17 February.

Mr. Saimbury: The Indonesian Army confirms that four persons were executed on 16 February (Syryanto, Surono, Soleiman and Rohayan). There are unconfirmed reports of the execution of two others. On 21 February, the Twelve expressed their regret in the Presidency address to the UN Commission on Human Rights that these executions were carried out so long after conviction.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the occupation of East Timor by Indonesia.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our policy with regard to the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia is to support the UN Secretary-General's role in promoting a settlement between Indonesia and Portugal. We believe that both parties will be concerned to find a settlement which fully protects the interests of the people of East Timor.

Namibia

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further measures Her Majesty's Government propose to take to help the Namibian economy.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are actively discussing with the future Government of Namibia how we can best help them after independence, in particular through the aid programme.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Brazil

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there has been further progress on the approval of projects under the memorandum of understanding with Brazil since the Minister for Overseas Development's reply to the hon. Member for Fylde of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *350*.

Mrs. Chalker: As I announced earlier this week, the first project has now been approved by the Brazilian Government. This is an important five-year climate research project, involving the Institute of Hydrology. We are contributing some £2·5 million. The first field mission will start this September. We are continuing our discussions with the Brazilian Government on other project proposals.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government have any plans to cut their aid to Indonesia in the light of continued human rights abuses there.

Mrs. Chalker: In determining the appropriate level of United Kingdom aid to individual countries, the Government take account of a number of factors, including the importance of human rights. Indonesia is in the low-income group of developing countries and we believe that the current level of British aid to Indonesia is appropriate in current circumstances.

WALES

Welsh Language

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many tutors are employed in a full-time capacity in Wales to teach the Welsh language to adults; and whether his Department has any plans to increase the number of full-time tutors of Welsh for adults.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally. We are making available some £305,000 this year to colleges, voluntary bodies and other providers of adult education to help support activity in this area. We are currently considering the level of support for 1990-91.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to help and sustain the Welsh language and culture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The proposals for the introduction of Welsh in the national curriculum in Wales will provide the single most important boost to the Welsh language over the years to come. All other policies in support of the language will therefore complement and support what is happening in schools.

In addition, the Government provide financial support for Welsh language and culture by way of grants to a wide range of organisations involved with the use and promotion of the language. Direct grant support in 1989-90 amounted to some £4·4 million. This figure will increase next year by 30 per cent. to a total of £5·9 million. My right hon. Friend will continue to look to the Welsh Language Board for advice in relation to all matters to do with the language and on how these grants can be harnessed to the greatest effect.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been dispensed to Welsh local authorities in grants for bilingual education under section 21 of the Education Act 1980 in each year since that Act came into force; how much he anticipates will have been granted by the end of the present financial year; and how much he has allocated for this purpose in the 1990-91 financial year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the information requested and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Health Care

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to set up a fund to help meet the additional travel expenses of relatives of patients who have been referred to treatment centres outside their own health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It will be for the patients concerned to assess the relative benefits of earlier treatment at the centres, including the possibility of additional travel for themselves and their relatives, compared with waiting for treatment more locally. As with any other hospital services, visitors on low incomes can apply for help with their travelling expenses to and from the centres from the Department of Social Security. We do not propose to introduce any additional assistance for the relatives of patients in treatment centres.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact on general practitioners' clinical responsibility of the decision to exclude general practitioners from referring their patients directly to treatment centres.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of general practitioners regarding his decision not to allow general practitioners to refer patients directly to treatment centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received no requests to meet representatives of general practitioners to discuss treatment centres. The centres will not impinge on general practitioners' clinical responsibility. GPs will continue to refer new patients direct to hospitals of their choice, which will in turn continue to treat the majority of patients. Treatment centres are an additional resource to offer patients already waiting the choice of earlier treatment.

This principle would be undermined if general practitioners were to refer new patients to treatment centres direct since the centres would then be likely to build up their own waiting lists. However, the operational policies of the ophthalmology and general surgery centres provide for re-referrals by general practitioners of patients who have been waiting on inpatient lists for more than four months. The policy of the orthopaedic centre in this respect will be kept under review.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many health authorities have agreed contracts with private companies for the provision of health services to National Health Service patients in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what extra cash he will allocate to each of the Welsh health authorities to maintain current levels of services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 11 January at columns 725-27, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the revenue and capital allocations to health authorities in Wales for 1990-91.

I would also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North on 12 February at columns 12-13 in which my right hon. Friend announced the distribution of almost £10 million which had been reserved for schemes to be centrally funded under the programme for the valleys initiative.

Further announcements will be made in due course about the distribution of other sums reserved for centrally directed developments in 1990-91.

Finally, I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 1 February at columns 260-62, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that further revenue provision would be made available to health authorities in 1990-91 (over and above the sum announced on 11 January) in respect of pay awards to staff covered by the review bodies arrangement. The distribution of this additional provision will depend upon staff in post and will be notified to authorities as soon as possible.

South Gwent Health Unit

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to have discussions with the trade unions involved before authorising proposals for revised management arrangements for the South Gwent health unit.

Mr. Grist: No. We are satisfied with the existing arrangements for the consideration of DHAs' revised management arrangements involving consideration by the executive committee of the Health Policy Board.

I understand, however, that in formulating its proposals Gwent health authority has consulted trade unions and this will be borne in mind by the executive committee. After further local consultation the authority will submit the proposals to the Department for approval.

Religious Education

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to improve the teaching of religious education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Education Reform Act enhances the place of religious education in the school curriculum, and central support is available to local education authorities which undertake in-service teacher training in the subject.

Nuclear Installations (Cancer)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will instigate investigations into the rates of incidence of cancer near nuclear installations in Wales following the recent report on Sellafield.

Mr. Grist: Analysis of the data available from the Wales cancer registry is under way. The data require careful scrutiny and validation. When the results are ready, I will make a statement.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what trends he is able to identify in respect of the incidence rates of various forms of cancer *(a)* in Wales as a whole and *(b)* in each district in Wales; and what information he has on trends in such incidence rates in the United Kingdom generally.

Mr. Grist: Information on the individual incidence rates and trends of cancer within Wales is presented in the Welsh Office publication "Cancer Registration in Wales, 1974-1984".

Figures for England and Wales are available from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Cancer statistics: registrations", while data for Scotland appear in "Scottish Health Statistics" published by the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service. Information on cancer registrations for Northern Ireland appear in the Department of Health and Social Services "Statistics and Research Bulletin".

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether, in the light of the Gardner report, he will commission fresh independent research into the incidence of leukaemia in north Wales and into the causes of high incidence of specific types of cancer in any part of Wales.

Mr. Grist: Welsh cancer registration data are kept under regular review. Where it appears that the rate of incidence of any particular form of cancer is significantly higher than would be expected consideration is given to the need for, and the most appropriate form of, investigation into possible causes.

Additionally, as announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health on 15 February, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment plans detailed epidemiological studies to obtain more information on the possible health effects in the offspring of parents occupationally exposed to radiation. These studies should start in the near future.

Community Care

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he will make a statement setting out his proposals for independent inspection units for community care services in Wales;

(2) whether he will make it his policy that independent inspection units for community care in Wales shall regularly review and report on the provision of services within the boundaries of each district authority in their area of responsibility;

(3) whether he will make it his policy that there shall be an independent inspection unit for the area of each local authority in Wales which has responsibility for social services.

Mr. Grist: A consultation paper on the setting up of independent inspection units in Wales has recently been widely circulated. Copies have been placed in the Library. Policy decisions on the establishment and operation of these units will be taken following consideration of the comments received as a result of the consultation exercise and the deliberations of a working group comprising representatives of the independent and public sectors which has been set up to consider the issue.

ENVIRONMENT

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the application of the new uniform business rate arrangements to the sale and purchase of small businesses.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the question of the cessation of transitional protection when the rateable occupier of a business property, large or small, changes.

Radon Gas

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further advice is being given to householders affected by radon gas as to how to tackle the problem; and what efforts are being made to ensure that builders etc. contacted by the public to tackle radon problems give correct advice to the householders.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The advice already available to householders affected by concentrations of radon in "The Householders' Guide to Radon" is still valid. A second edition is currently being prepared to take account of the new action level.

The building research establishment is engaged in a continuing programme of research on tackling radon problems and the results of this will be published in the form of practical advice for builders and others as they become available. Meanwhile, where owners of buildings are uncertain about the best way to proceed, they should consult the building research establishment.

Household Waste (Incineration)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England and Wales use incinerators to dispose of suitable household waste; and what plans he has to encourage more disposal of such rubbish by this method in the future.

Mr. Trippier: There are 30 municipal incinerators currently operated by local authorities in England and Wales and these dispose of some 8 per cent. of household waste. There is, however, no centrally held information on the number of local authorities which make use of these incinerators.

The Government encourage local authorities to employ the best practicable environmental means for the dispesal of their waste. It is for them to determine what that may be in the light of local circumstances.

Industrial Pollution

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a video tape and copy of the transcript of the "Northern Eye" programme on industrial pollution in Teesside, broadcast on 15 February.

Mr. Trippier: My Department already has copies of the transcript. It is unnecessary to have a copy of the video.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of contracts awarded by the Property Services Agency for each of the last three years were carried out by private building contractors; and what were their total values for each year.

Mr. Chope: All new construction work for the Property Services Agency is undertaken by private sector contractors. In the last three years, the proportion of maintenance work undertaken by the private sector has remained steady, at about 85 per cent.

The aggregate value of all of this work, at cash prices, was:

	£ million
1986-87	1,794
1987-88	1,827
1988-89	1,978

Local Government Finance

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of his Department towards attribution of liability for the community charge in respect of persons resident in buildings bisected by a district boundary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The rules for such buildings are set out in part V of the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/438). Broadly, a building is deemed to fall within the area of the charging authority which contains its greater or greatest part. Any person subject to a community charge by virtue of residence in the building will be subject to the community charge of that area only.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his written reply dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable per adult for each region and so on, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for Humberside the estimated percentage of the adult population, including spouses, now paying rates; the percentage expected to be chargeable to the poll tax; and the percentage expected to contribute the same or less than at present as a result of the proposed increase of 29 per cent. in the rate/taxpayer's contribution.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not available.

Westminster Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the figure of the equivalent of £60 per head was arrived at for Westminster council's land drainage grant.

Mr. Chope: I have no knowledge of any "land drainage grant" for Westminster council.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the National Rivers Authority was consulted about Westminster's contribution to flood control expenses before it was decided how much central Government's grant to Westminster council would be.

Mr. Chope: The standard spending assessment element for flood defence is based on net current expenditure in 1989-90, as defined in annex A of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England). This information was available without consulting the National Rivers Authority.

House Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the ratio of house prices to earnings in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* France.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Personal Transport

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the environmental effects of increased personal transport opportunities in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the Department of Transport's recent publication "Trunk Roads, England—Into the 1990s", and in particular to chapter 5.

"A Change in the Air"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to obtain a copy of the transcript and video cassette of the television programme "A Change In The Air" broadcast on 25 February.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Automobile Manufacturing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual output of chemical toxic emissions from the automobile manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not collected or held centrally in the Department.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what volume of environmentally damaging solvents are typically released into the atmosphere from the paint spraying of an automobile on the production line; and what policies he has to reduce this pollution.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested on the specific solvent emissions from automobile spraying is not available.

The United Kingdom Government are engaged with other signatories to the UN Economic Commission for Europe convention on long-range transport of air pollution in the production of a draft protocol for the reduction of volatile organic compound emissions.

Within the European Community we are discussing measures to reduce photochemical pollution. These will include reductions of VOC emissions.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is preparing guidance defining the best available techniques not entailing excessive costs to reduce solvent emissions from large-scale automobile spraying.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what volumes of toxic wastes are created annually from the manufacture of automobiles and road haulage vehicles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not held centrally.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *411*, whether all existing power stations will, in time, be required to be fitted with flue gas desulphurisation.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regard the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment as the best practicable means for limiting emissions of sulphur dioxide from coal or oil-fired power stations. Existing plant is required eventually to attain new plant standards if its lifetime justifies this.

Common Land

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 27 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *89*, when he will make a statement on the Government's intentions on common land legislation.

Mr. Trippier: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 11 January 1990, at column *683*.

Combustion Plants

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce a stated timetable for upgrading existing registered large combustion plants.

Mr. Trippier: I have already made clear our commitment to the timetable for reducing emissions from large combustion plants enshrined in the European Community directive. The detailed plan will be published at the time required by the directive.

Emission Reduction Plan

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the consultation paper on the proposed national emission reduction plan prior to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Trippier: Yes.

Pollution Abatement Technology

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the emission reduction plan will evaluate the cost-effectiveness of fitting pollution abatement technology, in terms of cost per tonne of sulphur abated, for differing sizes of plants.

Mr. Trippier: The emission reduction plan will contain the details specified in the large combustion plants directive (88/609/EEC).

Sewage Disposal (Torridge Estuary)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a decision has been made as to the type of sewage disposal intended for the Torridge estuary.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that a decision has not yet been made. South West Water Services Ltd. has carried out intensive environmental studies over the past three years in order to develop a comprehensive water quality plan for the Taw/Torridge estuary and to assess the long-term options for improved sewage disposal arrangements. Under the provisions of the Water Act 1989, any such improvement plans and related discharge applications will require the approval and formal consent of the National Rivers Authority. This is a matter, therefore, for South West Water and the NRA.

Special Needs Grants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many valid applications for special needs grants under the social fund were made to Grimsby and were refused because of cash limits on local expenditure; what advice his Department will give to applicants in the light of the recent High Court ruling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

In the period April 1989 to January 1990, 1,112 applications for community care grants were processed at Grimsby social security office. Of those applications 647 resulted in an award; of the remainder none was refused on budgetary grounds.

Our advice remains that any person who has a need which he considers might be met from the social fund should make an application to his local social security office in the normal way.

SCOTLAND

Nature Conservation

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to issue any guidance to the proposed Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland for the purposes of conserving land which is of national importance for nature conservation as provided for in section 29 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Section 29 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides powers to the Secretary of State to make nature conservation orders. Such an order is made only where there is a dispute between the Nature Conservancy Council and a landowner about land notified by the council as a site of special scientific interest under section 28 of the Act. There are no powers for the Secretary of State to issue guidance to the council under either section 28 or section 29 of the Act.

Children (Tumours)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all children with solid malignant tumours known to the health services are recorded in the Scottish health statistics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

Wind (North of Scotland)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations his Department has had with the Forestry Commission in respect of wind conditions in the north of Scotland; and what representations he has received from them in this matter.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission has three wind-monitoring stations in the north of Scotland—on Skye, at Leanachan near Fort William and at Rosarie in Moray—where wind speeds are recorded and the effect of wind on forests is studied. The commission has advised that the pattern of winds in this area has not been unusual in the first two months of 1990 and that there has been no significant damage to forests since the gale of February 1989.

New Towns

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of houses built by new town development corporations are now privately owned in each of the new towns.

Mr. Lang: As at 30 September 1989, the total number of corporation houses sold in each of the towns, as a percentage of houses completed by development corporations, is as follows:

	Percentage
East Kilbride	49·0
Glenrothes	46·5
Cumbernauld	51·7
Livingston	29·8
Irvine	24·0

Primary Teaching Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much the intake for primary teaching students is to increase in 1990 for each of the colleges under his control; and by how much he intends to increase the resources of these colleges to assist them to train these students.

Mr. Lang: The planned intakes for session 1990-91 to primary teacher training courses are shown in the table. The allocations of grant in aid for 1990-91 which I introduced on 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *869-70*, include funding for all these students. Having regard to the benefit of changes in rates relief for charities, colleges of education will receive overall increases in public funding of 14 to 15 per cent. over 1989-90.

Recommended intakes to primary teacher training courses in Scotland—1990-91

	BEd target	*PGCE quota*
Craigie	120 (100)	45 (30)
Jordanhill	240 (210)	1157 (75)
Moray House	200 (170)	100 (70)
Northern	240 (205)	110 (75)
St. Andrew's	200 (165)	80 (50)
TOTAL	1,000 (850)	450 (300)

Note: Figures for session 1989-90 in brackets.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reasons training agents are paid £10 under the employment training scheme for trainees directly recruited by training managers and to whom training agents give no service.

Mr. Lang: Training agents provide an independent source of guidance and support to trainees recruited directly by a training manager on, for example, issues causing dissatisfaction or where trainees wish to change their training objectives. To ensure that this independent brokerage role is fully accessible to trainees who have been directly recruited by training managers, the Training Agency pays a flat fee of £10 to training agents in respect of each such trainee who remains in employment training for more than six days and for whom an action plan has been lodged with the training agent.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the income, not grant in aid, received by the Scottish Development Agency in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table:

(£ million)

	Business[1] *income*	*Investment income*	*Public dividend capital*	*Borrowings from: National loans fund*	*European coal and steel community*
1984-85	38·7	3·9	1·1	3·5	—
1985-86	36·5	2·1	0·9	0·8	0·5
1986-87	41·7	3·0	2·1	—	—
1987-88	41·5	5·6	2·3	0·3	—
1988-89	52·2	4·0	—	3·5	—

[1] Derived mainly from property rents and sales.

Note

The figures do not include repayments from sub-borrowers in respect of loans made from National Loans Fund and European Coal and Steel Community monies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the grant in aid given to the Scottish Development Agency in cash terms and also indexed for inflation in each of the years of the Scottish Development Agency's existence.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table:

£ million

	Cash	*At 1988-89 prices*
1976-77	8·9	24·7
1977-78	32·0	77·9
1978-79	48·2	106·0
1979-80	58·4	110·0
1980-81	77·4	123·1
1981-82	76·2	110·4
1982-83	94·2	127·3
1983-84	83·6	108·0
1984-85	74·5	91·6
1985-86	92·6	108·1
1986-87	87·1	98·4
1987-88	91·4	98·0
1988-89	87·6	87·6
1989-90	95·8	[1]89·5

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what happens to the proceeds of the sale of equities by the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Lang: It has been the practice for some years to allow the agency to use such income to finance new investments; in the current year there will be more income than is required to finance new investments and the surplus will be used to reduce the total amount of public dividend capital owing to the Exchequer. Public dividend capital has been drawn down by the agency over the years as the principal means of financing new investments.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will happen to the proceeds of the Scottish Development Agency's property portfolio sale.

Mr. Lang: The agency's budget has always been funded to a significant extent by business receipts, within which income from selling premises to tenants has been a substantial element. The receipts from the disposal exercise will likewise be taken into account in setting the level of the agency's budget and the proportion of the budget to be met from grant in aid.

Teachers (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for monitoring the numbers of teachers from the ethnic minorities in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: As my hon. Friend the then Minister with responsibility for education announced on 25 May 1989, column 657, there are no plans to survey the ethnic origins of school teachers in Scotland.

Crofting Estates

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for the disposal of his crofting estates to community ownership.

Mr. Rifkind: I am issuing a consultation paper today seeking views on the possibility of transferring my crofting estates to trusts including representatives of crofting interests, or to some other form of community ownership. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many consortia bids for local enterprise company status the local enterprise company unit is currently considering; and which areas of Scotland they come from.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* Twenty-four applications for development funding have been received to date. The areas to which they relate are listed in the table.

	Area covered
(i) Development funding approved	
Grampian Enterprise	Grampian Region
Lanarkshire Enterprise	District Council areas of Hamilton, Clydesdale, Motherwell, East Kilbride and Monklands
Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise	Lothian Region
Renfrew Enterprise	District Council areas of Inverclyde, Renfrew and Eastwood
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise	Dumfries and Galloway Region
(ii) Under consideration	
Ayrshire Enterprise	District Council areas of Cunninghame, Kyle and Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, Kilmarnock and Loudoun
Borders Enterprise	Borders Region
Dunbartonshire Enterprise	District Council areas of Dumbarton, Clydebank, Strathkelvin, Bearsden and Milngavie, Cumberland and Kilsyth
Fife Enterprise	Fife Region
Forth Valley Enterprise	Central Region
Glasgow Local Enterprise Company	City of Glasgow District Council
Kingdom Enterprise	Fife Region
Perthshire Enterprise	District Council area of Perth and Kinross
Scottish Enterprise Tayside	Tayside Region
Argyll Enterprise	District Council area of Argyll and Bute
Argyll and the Islands Enterprise	District Council area of Argyll and Bute
Caithness and Sutherland Local Enterprise Company	District Council areas of Caithness and Sutherland
Inverness and Nairn Enterprise	District Council areas of Inverness and Nairn
Lochaber Ltd.	Lochaber District Council
Mid-Highland Enterprise	District Council area of Ross and Cromarty, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey and West Moray
Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey	District Council area of Badenoch and Strathspey and West Moray
Ross and Cromarty Enterprise	Ross and Cromarty District Council
Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise	Skye and Lochalsh District Council
Western Isles Local Enterprise Company	Western Isles Islands Council

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list his official visits to British industrial companies in each of the last three months;

(2) if he will list his regional visits in the last three months.

Mr. Ridley: My visits round the country, and my meetings with and visits to industrial companies are numerous, and do not lead themselves to the sort of precise classification suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Company Audits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend the Companies Act 1989 so as to require companies' annual returns to state whether or not a close personal relationship exists between the auditor and any officer of a company.

Mr. Redwood: No. The professional rules that the relevant supervisory bodies are required to have under the Companies Act 1989 are sufficient to provide against conflicts of interest.

East Germany (Pollution)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to offer assistance in the form of environmental clean-up technology developed in the United Kingdom to the German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Forth: On 22 January, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced that a know-how fund would be set up for eastern Europe. This would embrace our existing commitments to Poland and Hungary, and make available help for other east European countries once they are firmly committed to reform. It is too early to indicate the distribution of such funds by country or sector.

United Kingdom manufacturers of equipment for environmental improvement are being encouraged to develop links with prospective users in eastern Europe, including the German Democratic Republic, through a number of mechanisms. In particular, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, to be held in Bonn between 19 March and 11 April 1990, will include opportunities for business men from eastern and western European nations to identify requirements for environmental protection equipment. United Kingdom associations in the environmental field have been asked to inform their members of this event.

Patent Office

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made towards the establishment of the Patent Office as an executive agency.

Mr. Ridley: I am today establishing the Patent Office as an executive agency. The Patent Office is the fifth executive agency to be established within the DTI.

Establishing the Patent Office as an executive agency will assist the Patent Office further to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of its services. Accordingly, I have set the Patent Office the following productivity and quality of service targets for the next five years:

- to increase the productivity of patent examination by an average of at least 1·5 per cent. a year;
- to issue at least 90 per cent. of patent search reports within 12 weeks;
- to increase the productivity of trade mark examination by an average of at least 3 per cent. a year;
- to register at least 90 per cent. of unopposed trade mark applications within 24 months of receipt; and
- to reduce the cost of common services within the Patent Office by at least 20 per cent. in real terms.

Taken together these targets represent a requirement to improve efficiency by an average of more than 4 per cent. a year.

In addition, I expect the relocation of the Patent Office to Newport, Gwent, which is due to be completed in September 1991, to produce substantial savings in the running costs of the Patent Office.

Financial Services

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the purpose of the European Economic Community directive on capital adequacy; what will be the impact of the directive on the Financial Services Act; whether he has made any assessment of the impact of the directive on independent financial advisers in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The proposed EC directive on the capital adequacy of investment business is at an early stage and no draft has yet been presented to the Council of Ministers. It will set out the capital requirements with which those doing investment business must comply. It complements the investment services directive, which will allow an investment firm authorised in one member state to do business throughout the Community without the need for further authorisation.

Implementation of the provisions of the directive, once adopted, is likely to involve changes to the relevant rules of the Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulatory organisations and changes to the Bank of England's supervision of banks.

I am aware of the concern among independent financial advisers that the directive should take account of the way financial services business is done in the United Kingdom. We have made our position clear to the Commission on the aspects of the proposals which are of special concern to this group.

Soviet Union

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he last met his Soviet conterpart, they discussed the establishment of free market systems in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* I am preparing to meet my Soviet counterpart, Mr. Sitaryan, the chairman of the state foreign economic commission, for the first time in Moscow next month, when I hope to discuss a wide range of trade and economic subjects.

House of Fraser

10. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding publication of the report on House of Fraser.

Mr. Ridley *[pursuant to his answer, 17 January 1990, c. 286]:* I have been informed today by the director of the Serious Fraud Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions that they have withdrawn their objections to the publication of the report by inspectors of their investigation under section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985 into the affairs of House of Fraser Holdings plc. I intend therefore to publish it on 7 March. I do not intend to take any further action.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Statistics (Shropshire)

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what has been the total number of people employed by Shropshire education authority in each of the past five years;

(2) what has been the total number of pupils and students enrolled in Shropshire in each of the past five years;

(3) what has been the total number of teaching staff employed by Shropshire education authority in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total numbers of teachers and pupils in maintained schools and colleges in Shropshire in each of the past five years are given in the table. Data on the total number of people employed by Shropshire education authority are not held centrally.

Teaching staff employed and pupils-students enrolled in schools and colleges maintained by Shropshire LEA (full-time equivalents)[1]

	Teaching staff employed	Pupils-students enrolled[2]
1985	4,207	68,827
1986	4,258	68,737
1987	4,221	67,805
1988	4,245	66,944
1989	4,222	67,901

[1] Figures relate to January of the year shown, except that the data on students enrolled in maintained colleges of further and higher education (FHE) included in the pupils-students row are for the preceding November.

[2] In 1989 there was a change in the factors used to convert numbers of student enrolments in maintained FHE colleges to full-time equivalents, which had the effect of increasing the total full-time equivalents.

Beechem Cliff School

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of people who were signatories to the 38 statutory objections to the grant-maintained proposals for Beechem Cliff school, Avon.

Mrs. Rumbold: The signatories to the objections comprised 397 individuals and the governing bodies of 17 schools.

Postgraduate Students

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the tuition fee for postgraduate students will be in the academic year 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor: The levels at which higher education fees are set is for individual institutions. The maximum tuition fee that will be reimbursed through the awards system for eligible home students and those from other European Community countries on full-time postgraduate courses will be increased from £1,890 in the current academic year to £1,985 in 1990-91.

HEALTH

Anaesthetic Drugs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have *(a)* died and *(b)* suffered adverse side effects, from general anaesthetic drugs used in National Health Service hospitals for each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table gives the available information. It shows the number of deaths in England and Wales with an underlying cause of death attributed to general anaesthetics between 1979-88 and where the death has occurred in a National Health Service Hospital. Information relating to the number of adverse side-effects is not available.

Number of deaths from general anaesthetic drugs, NHS hospitals, 1979-88, England and Wales

Year	Category of death E855.1[1]	E938.1 to E938.4[1]
1979	—	1
1980	—	—
1981	—	2
1982	—	1
1983	—	2
1984	—	3
1985	1	—
1986	—	1
1987	—	—
1988	1	1

Source: OPCS death registrations.

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes: E855.1: Accidental poisonings by other drugs acting upon the central and autonomic systems: includes ether, gaseous anaesthetics, intravenous anaesthetics, halogenated hydrocarbon derivatives, thiobarbiturates.

E938.1 to E938.4: Other central nervous system depressants (general anaesthetics). Correct drug properly administered, but adverse reaction to it.

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received urging health authorities be referred for unfair practice in competitive tendering for laundering facilities from the industry's trade association; and what response he has given.

Mr. Freeman: There has been continuing dialogue between the Department and the laundry trade association about the competitive tendering initiative since 1983. Some of its representations relating to problems about the process and its implementation by health authorities were met by guidance issued in January 1986 and November 1987, including a practical guide and handbook on monitoring of contracts following an independent study sponsored by the National Provincial Hospitals Trust and partially funded by the Department.

A report issued by the association in mid-1988 highlighted a number of areas of continuing difficulty. The Department investigated the complaints made and consulted widely on the report's recommendations before responding fully to the association. In summary:

Its proposed short model contract was seen as unacceptable because it failed to safeguard health authority interests. The association has been invited, however, to send in contract documents used by hospitals in Holland for consideration.

General concerns about capital accounting will be met by the new arrangements for capital charging and asset registers. Regarding a specific complaint about capital investment in laundering equipment by a district health authority, a rigorous scrutiny by the region at the time concluded that this represented best value for money.

Independent scrutiny of tendering arrangements, tender exercises and costs was already provided by the statutory process of external audit.

Where contractors had firm and factual evidence of unfair practices, this should be taken up at the time with the district health authority's general manager and if necessary with the appropriate regional health authority.

The association has also been invited to provide specific examples of completed tender exercises where, in its view,

the in-house team's costings were manifestly incomplete and this has operated to the detriment of a competitive contractor's bid. Such evidence is awaited.

We welcome the fact that the competitive tendering initiative for laundry services has improved value for money and generated savings of over £9 million.

Rates

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the amount paid in lieu of rates for 1989-90 for each district health authority and special health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is reported in the annual accounts of health authorities. Information from such accounts for 1989-90 will not be available until the autumn.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what terms and conditions of employment within the National Health Service will apply once a self-governing trust is established.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will remain firmly in the NHS. Staff who transfer from health authority to NHS trust employment will retain their existing contracts and all rights arising from them, subject to the substitution of the new employer for the old and any consequential technical changes. It will be open to NHS trusts to seek to introduce changes in existing contracts at any time after transfer. In doing so, they will be free to decide whether to continue to adopt NHS Whitley council conditions or to make alternative arrangements if they so wish.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many places are currently provided by health authorities for the elderly in nursing homes in each health authority in England.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally. The Government consider continuous nursing care services to be an integral part of NHS provision for those elderly people who require them. However, the actual level of service to be provided by a health authority is a matter for that authority to decide for itself based on local needs and priorities.

NHS Charges

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about National Health Service prescription and related charges and spectacle vouchers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will shortly be laying before the House regulations for increases in prescription charges in the National Health Service in England and Wales to come into effect on 1 April 1990. The prescription charge will increase by 25p from £2·80 to £3·05. The increase of 8·9 per cent. reflects the higher cost of the pharmaceutical services and will provide about £13 million extra income to the resources available to the Health Service in England and Wales.

The new charge will continue to represent less than half the cost of an average prescription to the NHS. Under existing exemption arrangements over three quarters of prescription items are provided free of charge and these exemption arrangements will continue. The four-monthly and annual prepayment certificates will continue to be provided, the fees for which will increase from £14·50 and £40·00 to £15·80 and £43·50 respectively. A prescription charge will be paid in respect of less than 20 per cent. of all items dispensed in the NHS as a result of the exemption arrangements and continued availability of prepayment certificates. The charges for elastic stockings and tights, wigs (with the exception of the charge for a full bespoke human hair wig) and fabric supports supplied through the hospital service will also be increased from 1 April, as set out in table A.

I am pleased to announce a significant move to help those who receive vouchers for spectacles. The value of the vouchers will be increased from 1 April and some definitions changed so that more prescriptions fall into the higher bands. In all, the amount paid in spectacle vouchers is expected to rise by some 10 per cent. As from 1 April, spectacle voucher values will be increased by around 4·7 per cent. overall with the value of the most frequently prescribed A and D vouchers rising by 5·9 and 6·1 per cent. respectively. Voucher values for the hospital eye service will also rise by the same amount. In addition to the general increase, the specification of the higher spectacle voucher bands B and E will be more widely defined to take in more optical prescriptions. Those affected by this change will benefit by receiving significantly more money from which to buy the spectacles of their choice. The revised voucher values are set out in table B.

Table A
New hospital service charges from 1 April 1990
(present charge in brackets)

Elastic stockings and tights, wigs and fabric supports	£	£
Each elastic stocking	3·05	(2·80)
Tights supplied through the hospital service	6·10	(5·60)
Surgical brassiere	13·00	(12·00)
Abdominal or spinal support	17·00	(16·00)
Stock modacrylic wig	26·00	(24·00)
Partial human hair wig	67·00	(62·00)
Full bespoke human hair wig	97·00	(97·00)

Table B
National Health Service spectacle voucher values

	From 1 April 1990 £	*Present value* £
Voucher		
A	18·00	17·00
B	28·75	28·00
C	47·00	46·00
D	34·75	32·75
E	59·75	58·00
F	100·00	98·00
G[1]	100·00	98·00
H[1]	[2]28·85	[2]26·50
Complex lenses		
Single vision	3·50	3·25
Bifocal	18·75	18·00
Prisms per lens		
Single vision	4·00	3·75
Bifocal	5·00	4·75
Tints per lens		
Single vision	2·00	1·90
Bifocal	2·50	2·40
Photochromic per lens[1]		
Single vision	2·00	1·90
Bifocal	2·50	2·40

	From 1 April 1990 £	Present value £
Small frame supplement	34·50	33·00
Supplement for special facial characteristics[1]	34·50	33·00

[1] Hospital eye service.
[2] Per lens.

National Health Service Contracts

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when further guidance on National Health Service contracts will be published.

Mr. Freeman: I have today had copies of "Contracts for Health Services: Operating Contracts" placed in the Library. This includes "specimen" contracts, which have largely been developed within the National Health Service with financial support from the Department. These contracts are first efforts at those which will be necessary to stipulate the nature of the service to be delivered, the quality to be achieved and the resources to be provided for every aspect of National Health Service services across the country. They are not blueprints, nor do they set precedents to be followed by every district health authority. The contracts and the further guidance, together with the previous document "Contracts for Health Services: Operational Principles", are intended to stimulate further detailed work across the country by clinicians and managers to develop useful forms of contract for every part of the service. We intend to implement contract funding in April 1991.

Child Cancer

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of child cancer, including leukaemia, patients recorded in each of the paediatric hospitals in the United Kingdom each year over the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The exact information requested is not available.

The data shown are collected from cases reported to local cancer registries (based at regional health authority level), and are not subdivided into those recorded from paediatric hospitals. The data cover the years 1980 to 1984, later data for the United Kingdom as a whole not yet being available.

Number of cases of (a) all malignant neoplasms[1] and (b) leukaemia[2], ages 0 to 14 years United Kingdom, 1980 to 1984

Year	(a) All malignant neoplasms		(b) Leukaemia	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1984	690	563	224	190
1983	699	549	246	198
1982	642	518	210	182
1981	662	560	217	184
1980	688	534	213	169

[1] Assigned to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 140 to 208.
[2] Assigned to the 9th revision ICD codes 204 to 208.

Gay People (Adoptions)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's policy concerning the fostering or adoption of children by individual unmarried lesbian or gay persons who fulfil all the requirements of suitability and fitness to adopt or foster.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In reaching a decision relating to the fostering or adoption of a child by any person, courts and child care and adoption agencies are required to give first consideration to the need to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. There is no prohibition on fostering or adoption by single people, who are equally subject to the statutory requirements for thorough investigation and assessment as prospective foster parents and adopters.

Eye Tests

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will seek to exempt, with immediate effect, all retirement pensioners from eye test charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Pensioners as a group have never been automatically exempt from the payment of optical charges since NHS charges were first introduced in 1951. The Government are keen to focus help with sight test charges on those who need it most, and we have therefore ensured that pensioners who are on a low income or who have certain special medical needs, will continue to be entitled to a free NHS sight test. We have no plans to extend entitlement to NHS sight tests to all pensioners regardless of income.

Tuberculosis Vaccine

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether regular supplies of tuberculosis vaccine are now being received; and whether the health authorities have been advised on whether to resume their routine school immunisation programme.

Mr. Freeman: Temporary supply difficulties arose last year whilst our source of supply moved production facilities to a new site. This necessitated conserving remaining stocks by restricting vaccination to those at particular risk of exposure to tuberculosis. These include children who may be contacts of people with pulmonary tuberculosis as well as recent immigrants from developing countries with a high prevalence of tuberculosis and any infants born to them subsequently. Adequate stocks remain for that purpose.

Fresh supplies should be available by the end of April 1990, so routine school vaccination could commence from that time. In October 1989, the Department asked health authorities to make plans to vaccinate the missed 1989 cohort of children at the same time as the 1990 cohort. The Department will be writing again in March to all health authorities suggesting that they can now resume the routine BCG schools' vaccination programme, in the summer or autumn terms depending on local arrangements.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the reports from health authorities about the hours worked by junior hospital doctors in September

1989 were provided by regional health authorities or district health authorities; and whether these reports cover all junior hospital doctors in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 8 February at column 770. The reports relate to junior hospital doctors in England.

Hospital Complaints

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether hospital trusts will be subject to the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Community Care

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will be responsible for co-ordinating and supervising at a local level health and community care for persons in care both public and private.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: District health authorities and local authority social services departments will be responsible for assessing the health and social care needs of their resident populations. Each will then commission a range of services to meet those needs. DHAs will secure their services through a system of contracts or service agreements, as will local authorities when not directly providing them. In agreeing contracts, DHAs and SSDs will wish to satisfy themselves about a number of factors including the quality of treatment and care. It will be important for both district health authorities and local authorities to ensure that services are integrated and co-ordinated: they will need to ensure there is close and effective collaboration between the various elements which make up community care.

Alcohol Research

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on animal experiments related to alcohol reseach since 1980.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The Department is not currently funding any such research. Readily available information about research for previous years is contained in the DHSS handbooks on research and development published annually. Copies are available in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Schools

8. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers and pupils are currently in Northern Ireland schools; what were the comparable figures for five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1988, the latest year for which information is available, there were 18,491 teachers and 339,741 pupils.

The comparable figures for five, 10 and 15 years ago, for teachers and pupils respectively, were 18,887 and 352,557; 19,116 and 372,380; 15,983 and 358,801.

Dogs

17. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the control of dogs in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Northern Ireland has its own separate legislative provisions in relation to dogs under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. The legislation is administered by the 26 Northern Ireland district councils. The system is working well.

Londonderry

18. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on new commercial and industrial developments in Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: Since 1983 private sector commercial investment in Londonderry has totalled some £40 million either spent, under way or projected on local retail, offices, shops, restaurants and hotel developments. The most welcome recent proposed commercial development is the announcement of a substantial investment in a major town centre shopping complex together with a proposed new hotel development.

Laganside

19. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what actions are proposed for the regeneration of Laganside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I am pleased to report that the Laganside corporation has made good progress in the regeneration of Laganside.

County Towns

20. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what actions he is taking to revitalise county towns in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on 1 February 1990, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, c. *337*.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

21. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the Government of the Irish Republic about article 4(b) of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I discussed political matters with Mr. Collins most recently at our meetings on 4 and 21 February. Both Governments have made clear that they wish to encourage political dialogue in Northern Ireland.

28. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on recent ministerial discussions within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I met Mr. Collins on 4 and 21 February and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State met Mr. Burke on 15 February. At these meetings, discussions

centred on important issues with which it had been intended to deal at the postponed conference on 31 January.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has had any recent discussion regarding the dismantling of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. The Government remain committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the principles it embodies. However, we remain willing to examine any proposals concerning the agreement, particularly if they are likely to command widespread support.

Small Firms

22. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further steps he plans to take to encourage small firms.

Mr. Needham: The Government in Northern Ireland continue to encourage the promotion of enterprise within the Province's small business sector.

Railways

23. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of Northern Ireland railways; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 16 January 1990, when policy, financial and operational matters were discussed.

Conservation

24. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to conserve the environment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Northern Ireland has an up-to-date legislative code for nature and countryside conservation.

There are 45 national reserves, nine areas of outstanding natural beauty and 24 areas of special scientific interest. We are taking steps to ensure that further designations will be made over the next few years.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has embarked on the first stages of the designation of Northern Ireland's first marine nature reserve at Strangford lough.

The Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside provides valuable advice on all these aspects. The Department of the Environment encourages conservation by means of grant aid to voluntary bodies and others and by the provision of educational literature and information in particular at its seven country parks and at countryside centres.

The listing and scheduling procedures for historic buildings and monuments are continuing, and 7,612 buildings have been listed. One hundred and sixty-seven historic monuments have been taken into state care while 1,000 have been scheduled.

The Department of the Environment exercises control over water and industrial air pollution in the Province and has responsibility for oversight of the environmental health functions of the district councils. In general, water and air quality are of a high standard in Northern Ireland.

The Department of the Environment, as sole planning authority for Northern Ireland, is aware of its responsibilities in the area of conservation. This is reflected in its rural planning policy, in the preparation of development plans and in its consideration of planning applications which involve proposals that would affect the environment.

The Department of Agriculture also has a significant influence on environmental conservation in the countryside. Among other things, it carries out a wide range of environmental research work and gives conservation advice to farmers. It provides positive incentives to farmers to engage in environmentally friendly farming practices under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme. Two such areas have been designated and consideration is being given to further designations.

Housing Executive

25. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations were held between the Department of the Environment and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive about the internal rationalisation proposals and subsequently about the reduction of the regional offices from six to four which is proposed to take effect from 1992.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that the rationalisation proposals will ensure that the services provided by district offices, which are the normal point of contact for the executive's clients, will be fully maintained and the operation of additional sub-district offices is being considered as a means of bringing services even closer to them.

The Department of the Environment has not yet been formally consulted about the proposals currently being developed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. We know that the executive is considering such a reduction as part of an organisational review for the new decade and has consulted the Northern Ireland housing council, district councils, voluntary housing bodies and the Northern Ireland public service alliance. The Department encourages the executive to improve its organisation to provide its services in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.

Kincora Boys' Home

26. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any further information on the Kincora boys' home and the Wallace file that was lost.

Mr. Cope: I have nothing to add to the information contained in the answer given in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 30 January 1990, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, columns *110-13*, and in a letter written by the Secretary of State for Defence to the same hon. Member, a copy of which was placed in the Library.

Labour Statistics

27. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment.

Mr. Needham: At 11 January 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 100,413 unemployed claimants in the Province, representing 14·2 per cent. of the work force. Seasonally adjusted unemployment, which gives a better indication of trends, has fallen by an average of 1,100 per month during the past six months and is now at 14 per cent., which is its lowest level for over seven years.

30. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current rate of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The latest unemployment figures for January 1990 show that there were 100,413 persons claiming unemployment benefit in Northern Ireland and this represented 14·2 per cent. of the total work force. The seasonally adjusted figure, which gives a better indication of trends, is at its lowest level for more than seven years and shows that the strong underlying downward trend in unemployment in the Province is continuing.

36. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently self-employed in the Province and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The most recent estimate derived from labour force surveys and the June agricultural census is that at June 1989 the number of self-employed in Northern Ireland was approximately 70,000.

51. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are unemployed in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 11 January 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 100,413 persons claming unemployment benefit in Northern Ireland.

Electricity Exports

29. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans there are to offer electricity for export to the Republic.

Mr. Needham: None at present. The interconnector between Northern Ireland and the Republic was put out of action by terrorist attacks in the 1970s and has not been restored.

Mutual Understanding

31. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to promote education to improve mutual understanding between the communities in the Province.

Dr. Mawhinney: Major steps are already being taken in this direction through the education for mutual understanding (EMU) programme which is incorporated as a compulsory cross-curricular theme in the new common curriculum. EMU enables young people to learn about and value their own culture and traditions and the culture and traditions of others.

Grant aid under the cross-community contact scheme, introduced in September 1987, has supported joint programmes by about a third of schools and 300 youth groups. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland also supports a number of organisations which promote reconciliation in school and youth groups.

Community Care

32. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his proposals for community care.

Mr. Needham: Our proposals will be set out in a paper to be published shortly.

Organic Food

33. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland is taking to encourage the development of organic agriculture in Northern Ireland in response to the increasing demand for organic food.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Northern Ireland's food is usually more natural since our agriculture is based upon low input with high health standards in livestock and plants.

We are also setting up a demonstration organic farming unit which should encourage and benefit those interested in organic farming.

Rural Development

34. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to promote rural development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is a need for a better focus and co-ordinated action towards social and economic development in the most deprived rural areas of Northern Ireland. The inter-departmental committee on rural development will oversee Government policies and programmes in these areas to ensure the maximum impact of existing expenditure with due sensitivity to identified needs in the areas themselves. Opportunities for further action will be consulted. There is a determination to achieve rural improvement.

Ambulance Dispute

35. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the effects of the ambulance workers' dispute on the emergency services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Full accident and emergency care has been maintained by the ambulance service since the dispute began. Some services to outpatient clinics have been affected, but all patients requiring urgent treatment have been transported. No outpatient clinic has been cancelled because of this dispute. It has not been necessary to seek assistance from the RUC or from voluntary aid societies.

Security

37. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

44. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the right hon. and hon. Gentlemen to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

Road Closures

38. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on road closures between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

50. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the closure of cross-border roads.

Mr. Cope: The Government recognise that many crossing points between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland serve a valuable social and economic purpose. We are also aware that some crossing points are particularly valuable to terrorists. No crossing point is closed unnecessarily. But the first duty of Government is to protect life. In accordance with that duty, we will continue to support action by the police, assisted where necessary by the Army, to close or reclose border crossings when we are satisfied that this is necessary to protect the lives of those, including many particularly vulnerable members of the community, who live or work in border areas.

Irish Prime Minister

39. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet the Irish Prime Minister; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Brooke: I have no current plans to meet the Taoiseach.

Tobacco Products

40. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to stop the sales of tobacco products to children.

Mr. Needham: The sale of tobacco products to children who appear to be under 16 is illegal. Responsibility for enforcing the law rests with the police.

Industrial Development Board

41. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council on the performance of the Industrial Development Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council on the performance of the Industrial Development Board was published on 22 February. The Government welcome the report as a valuable contribution to debate on industrial development in Northern Ireland and will be giving full consideration to its detailed recommendations.

Police Operations

42. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when public confidence in policing policy and operations was last discussed with Ministers from the Republic of Ireland within the Anglo-Irish Conference.

Mr. Cope: This matter was raised at the last conference meeting on 30 November.

Devolution

43. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in consultations regarding devolution.

Mr. Brooke: Since the answer I gave to my hon. Friend on 1 February, I and my colleagues have had a number of exploratory meetings to discuss the scope for political progress within Northern Ireland, both with the leadership of the main constitutional political parties and with the Irish Government. I expect to have further such meetings.

Vehicle Examinations

45. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the waiting time for an official vehicle examination; and if he will make a statement on procedures for such examinations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average waiting time for a vehicle inspection appointment has been reduced from six weeks in August 1989 to four weeks at the present time. The annual inspection of private cars, heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles is carried out by the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland, in 15 purpose-built centres.

Economic Growth

46. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the trend of growth of the economy in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: The Northern Ireland economy, like the United Kingdom economy, has experienced sustained growth since 1981. Latest figures show an impressive growth of manufacturing output recently. The prospects for 1990 are substantially dependent upon economic conditions in the United Kingdom economy as a whole.

Belfast

47. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on commercial and industrial development in Belfast.

Mr. Needham: I am pleased to report that in recent years commercial and industrial development in Belfast has reached unprecedented levels.

Terrorism

48. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of terrorist incidents since 3 November 1989.

Mr. Cope: Since 3 November 1989 there have been 137 terrorist-related incidents, 13 of which resulted in fatalities.

Integrated Education

49. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how he proposes to offer opportunities for integrated education; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Part VI of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which came into operation on 20 February 1990, makes provision to facilitate the development of integrated schools.

Under the new legislation, it is now possible for the Government to give financial support to integrated schools being set up from new and for parents of pupils at existing schools to vote that integrated status should be sought for their schools.

The statutory duty is also placed upon the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education.

Nuclear Magnetic Facilities

52. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when nuclear magnetic resonance and X-ray facilities will be available in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: An assessment of need is at present being undertaken by the Eastern board. Subject to satisfactory completion, a magnetic resonance imaging service will be considered with other priorities for funding in the 1991-92 year.

Drug Education

53. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on drug education in schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: Schools have an important role in discouraging young people from getting involved in drugs. As part of health education, which recent legislation includes as a compulsory element of the common curriculum for all schools in Northern Ireland, children will be taught about the serious risks inherent in the misuse of drugs and other harmful substances. This will build on what is already good practice in many schools.

Musgrave Park Hospital

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current waiting time for those residing in each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland for hip replacements and other similar orthopaedic operations at the Musgrave Park hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested. Details of the waiting list and times broken down by referring hospitals are as follows:

	Months waiting						
Reference source	*0 to 2*	*3 to 5*	*6 to 8*	*9 to 12*	*13 to 23*	*24+*	*Totals*
Armagh	—	5	3	—	—	2	10
Ballymena	7	10	4	9	12	6	48
Ballymoney	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
BCH	12	19	10	14	16	10	81
Coleraine	3	1	—	—	1	—	5
Con Ref	—	1	7	1	—	—	9
Craigavon	4	7	4	5	5	4	29
Downpatrick	7	7	—	4	5	1	24
Dungannon	—	5	—	1	5	5	16
Enniskillen	5	15	5	13	11	—	49
Larne	3	11	4	3	3	3	27
Lisburn	2	3	3	—	1	1	10
Magherafelt	6	1	—	1	1	1	10
Mater Hospital	4	2	3	—	—	2	11
Musgrave Park	2	5	1	1	—	3	12
Newry	4	6	5	4	5	8	32
Newtownards	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
Rheumatology	—	—	1	1	—	2	4
RVH	16	44	12	17	13	6	108
UHD	4	5	2	2	3	2	18
Whiteabbey	5	6	4	—	6	—	21
TOTALS	88	154	68	76	87	56	529

European Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet representatives of the European Commission; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Cope: My colleagues and I frequently have meetings with EC Commissioners, but no such meetings are currently planned.

Health Service

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to take a decision on the provision of a new hospital for the Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: A decision will be taken when the further appraisal initiated by the Northern board has been completed.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many handicapped children are in residential care in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: There are eight mentally handicapped children aged under 16 years currently in residential care in Northern Ireland. There are no physically handicapped children in residential care.

Licensed Premises (Metric Measures)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the consultation procedure on the introduction of metric measures on licensed premises.

Mr. Needham: A consultation paper entitled "Metrication: Sales of Spirits for Consumption on Licensed Premises" was issued on 18 September 1989 to 35 trade and other bodies; five replies were received. As required by article 48(2) of the Weights and Measures

(Northern Ireland) Order 1981, interested parties will have a further opportunity to comment when the draft amending legislation is published.

Business Failures

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the levels of business failures in Northern Ireland in 1989.

Mr. Needham: During 1989, 176 companies went into liquidation compared with 174 in the previous year. Two hundred and twenty one bankruptcy orders were made in 1989 compared with 146 in 1988.

Community Projects

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made in the development of community projects between schools; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the cross-community contact scheme was introduced in September 1987 to promote contacts across the community divide, about a third of the schools in Northern Ireland have received assistance towards the costs of structured, ongoing joint programmes.

In addition, the education for mutual understanding programme is incorporated as a compulsory cross-curricular theme in the new common curriculum.

Inward Investment

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the prospects for inward investment into Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The attraction of inward investment is a crucial factor in the economic development of Northern Ireland, but the prospects for investment are always difficult to predict.

Milk Quota

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the distribution of the additional milk quota.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 13 February that he had submitted to the European Commission for approval the United Kingdom proposals for the allocation of the extra 1 per cent. quota.

The proposals include allocation to new entrants; to small producers; to producers in remote areas; and to producers whose tribunal awards had not been granted in full because insufficient quota was available.

Employment Training

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of employment training.

Mr. Needham: Some 2,764 persons are now participating in the job training programme which is the equivalent of employment training and I plan to expand the programme next year.

Football

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he is making to the Irish Football Association following incidents at a recent football match at Windsor Park.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* The Irish Football Association is aware of and shares my concern at the crowd disturbances at Windsor park. The Association is undertaking a thorough investigation and I shall receive a copy of its report.

Mushrooms

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial assistance LEDU has given in each of the last five years towards the development of the mushroom industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* LEDU grants paid to the mushroom industry over the past five years were as follows:

	Amount (£)
1984-85	90,997
1985-86	209,948
1986-87	95,899
1987-88	154,907
1988-89	293,981
Total	845,732

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single pensioner households in Scotland are in receipt of income support or have been in receipt of income support or supplementary benefit for each of the past five years, expressed as a percentage of all single pensioner households and as a numerical total.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information is in the table. The figures relate to single people aged 60 and over. The information requested is not available for single pensioner households.

Single people in Scotland aged 60 and over

Thousands

	1983	*1984*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
(a) Total	2,195	2,192	2,178	2,174	2,168
(b) In receipt of Income Support	131	138	135	150	149
Percentage in receipt of Income Support	5·97	6·30	6·20	6·90	6·90

Note: The population figures are mid-year projections from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The numbers of benefit recipients are taken from the Annual Statistical Enquiries (ASE) in December 1983, December 1984, February 1986, May 1987 and May 1988. No ASE was produced in 1985.

Residential Care

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those organisations whose evidence as to the cost of providing care in voluntary and private residential and nursing homes is taken into account in setting national income support limits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We receive a considerable number of views and representations from a variety of interested organisations and individuals who are entitled to have their communications treated in confidence. They are of course free to publish this evidence themselves if they wish.

Social Fund

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate for social fund spending on loans and grants for the next two years.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 10 November 1989 at column *813*. An announcement regarding the budget for 1991-92 will be made nearer the time.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals have so far benefited from social fund loans.

Mr. Scott: Since the beginning of the scheme in April 1988 over 1·7 million budgeting loans and crisis loans have been awarded. It is not possible to say how many individuals have benefited as an applicant may have received more than one loan.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking, following the High Court judgment on 21 February on the operation of the social fund, to ensure that every social fund application which has been refused is reviewed in the light of the judgment and in accordance with direction 31 in the social fund manual.

Mr. Scott: Our intention is that the revised guidance to social fund officers to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member on 26 February at column *58* should be accompanied by any necessary advice on the question of reviews.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether social fund officers are free to disregard the paragraphs of the social fund manual in which they are told they should under no circumstances make an award which cannot be paid from the local office budget.

Mr. Scott: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 26 February at column *58*, a letter was sent by electronic mail on the day of the High Court judgment which advised social fund officers that the local office budget and the level of priority that might usually be met are factors to be taken into account in reaching a decision and that the state of the local office is not the overriding factor. We intend to issue revised guidance shortly.

Training Schemes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the effect on the income support of participants in the action credit pilot scheme who receive financial help in kind towards their travel-to-work and meal costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The rules for the treatment of payments for travel and meal costs are the same for participants working under the action credit scheme as for anyone in part-time employment and receiving income support. Financial help with these expenses is normally treated as earnings and taken into account in the usual way. However, any payment in respect of expenses which are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of the duties of the employment is fully disregarded. Similarly, payments made in kind, such as the provision of a meal or a bus pass, are completely ignored.

Family Benefits

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving family credit in the areas covered by the *(a)* Poplar, *(b)* Stepney and *(c)* Shoreditch Department of Social Security offices; and how many in Tower Hamlets as a whole.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of families receiving family credit who were living in the areas covered by the local social security offices in Tower Hamlets at the time their award was made is as follows:

	Number
(a) Poplar	490
(b) Stepney	260
(c) Shoreditch	1,010
TOTAL	1,760

Women Claimants

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of women in part-time or full-time employment who receive benefits excluding child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table.

Estimated numbers of women in full-time or part-time employment in receipt of benefits excluding child benefit and one parent benefit in Great Britain in 1987

	Number in receipt of benefit (000's)
Part time	375
Full-time	405
Total	780

Notes:

1. The estimates are derived from the 1987 Family Expenditure Survey which is a sample survey, and may be subject to sampling errors. Only benefits personally received by women are counted.
2. The table is confined to employed and self-employed women under pension age. Full-time work is defined as 24 hours or more per week.
3. Benefits include all State Benefits (including Widows Benefit) except child benefit and one-parent benefit.

Food Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to adjust pension and income support payments in light of the increases in the price of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Increases in food prices are taken into account in the indices used to calculate annual increases in these benefits.

Pensioners

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the percentage increase in real terms in the incomes of pensioners receiving supplementary benefit or income support between 1979 and 1987; and how much of the increase was accounted for by *(a)* social security benefits, *(b)* occupational pensions, *(c)* income from savings and *(d)* earnings, respectively.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

DEFENCE

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those categories of parliamentary questions on which it is the policy of his Department not to answer, together where known with the date of the blocking answer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is our policy to answer all parliamentary questions. However, successive Governments have judged that there are a number of defence-related matters on which it would not be in the national interest to offer detailed comment; among these are operations, intelligence and security.

It would involve disproportionate cost and effort to list the dates of past answers which reflect this policy.

Low Flying

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from members of the public in respect of low-flying aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: During January 1990, the Ministry of Defence received 381 inquiries or complaints about military low-flying training in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints he has received over the past 12 months about low-flying military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: Between 1 February 1989 and 31 January 1990, the Ministry of Defence received 7,896 inquiries and complaints about military low flying in the United Kingdom.

Disarmament Conference

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part his Department is playing in the Geneva conference on disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence contributes in a number of ways to the conference on disarmament, particularly through the provision of military, technical and scientific staff and other assistance to the United Kingdom delegation in Geneva.

Laser Targeting Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what distance is the United States Air Force laser targeting system, Pave Tack, hazardous to the sight of an observer viewing with (i) the naked eye and (ii) binoculars.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These distances are classified. However, the military laser safety committee issues strict safety instructions on the use of all military lasers in the United Kingdom and these are observed at all air weapons ranges when Pave Tack is being used.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents of temporary blindness have been reported by range staff and civilians that may have been caused by laser targeting systems for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No such incidents have been reported.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ranges in the United Kingdom are cleared for use by the Pave Tack laser targeting system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following ranges in the United Kingdom are cleared for use by the Pave Tack laser targeting system:

RAF Holbeach; RAF Wainfleet; RAF Donna Hook; RAF Jurby; RAF Cowden; RAF Tain; RAF Rosehearty and Garvie Island.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information is provided for the range staff and the local civilian population in the area of ranges cleared for use by aircraft operating the Pave Tack laser targeting system regarding the dangers of observing aircraft on practice bombing runs using this equipment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Instructions on laser safety are contained within the station standing orders for each air weapons range. Staff are instructed not to use magnifying optical devices, such as binoculars, when lasers are in use, unless the devices are fitted with filters or staff are wearing

goggles. Visitors to the ranges are briefed on these requirements. No specific information is provided to the public. However, warning signs instruct people to keep away from danger areas when the range is in use. If any unauthorised person is identified within the danger area, all use of the range will cease.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what regulations cover use of the Pave Tack laser targeting system over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of joint and single service publications, together with air weapons range orders, cover the use of the Pave Tack laser targeting system at ranges in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which laser targeting systems, other than Pave Tack, are cleared for use on United Kingdom training ranges.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Three laser targeting systems, other than Pave Tack, are cleared for use on United Kingdom training ranges. These are an airborne laser ranging and marked target seeker (LRMTS); a ground-based laser target marker used in conjunction with LRMTS; and Pave Spike, a system similar to Pave Tack.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence police person-days are involved in *(a)* escorting vehicles involved in an off-base dispersal exercise in support of the ground-launched cruise missile system from Greenham Common to the Salisbury Plain training area, *(b)* guarding the Salisbury Plain training area for the duration of the exercises and *(c)* escorting the vehicles for their return to RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice, for operational and security reasons, to give information of this kind.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many off-base dispersal exercises in support of the ground-launched cruise missile system at RAF Greenham Common are scheduled for the next 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These exercise deployments will continue for about a further year until the withdrawal of ground-launched cruise missiles is substantially complete. However, for operational and security reasons it is not the practice to give details of future such exercises.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many off-base dispersal exercises in support of the ground-launched cruise missile system at RAF Greenham Common there have been in the last 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Eleven.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all areas of special use airspace within 15 miles of RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: The following categories of "special use" airspace lie within 15 miles of RAF Greenham Common: airways and the London terminal manoeuvring area, military aerodrome traffic zones, restricted areas and a military avoidance area.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the implications for flight safety of the existence of *(a)* a Hilton hotel and *(b)* a Tesco superstore under the flight path at the western end of the runway at RAF Greenham Common;

(2) whether his Department was consulted before planning permission was given by Newbury district council for *(a)* a Hilton hotel and *(b)* a Tesco superstore under the flightpath at the western end of the runway at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: In both cases the Ministry of Defence was consulted before planning permission was given but, as the established criteria for safe runway use of RAF Greenham Common were satisfied, no objection was raised.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for flight safety of the unreported light civil air traffic in the area of RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: All aircraft in the immediate vicinity of RAF Greenham Common come under the control of the base's air traffic controllers. I know of no problems concerning civilian light aircraft.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the reasons why no practice approaches are allowed at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: There is currently no operational requirement for aircraft to make practice approaches to RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state what restrictions there are for aircraft using visual flight rules landing on runway 29 at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: No general restrictions apply within the military air traffic zone at RAF Greenham Common, but the air traffic controllers at the base will regulate the use of runway 29 according to circumstances prevailing at the time.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has formulated a disaster response plan for responding to an accident involving an aircraft crashing into *(a)* a Hilton hotel or *(b)* a Tesco superstore under the flightpath at the western end of the runway at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: Like other operational RAF stations, RAF Greenham Common has formulated accident response plans, covering accidents both on and off the base. These are co-ordinated as appropriate with the local authority and local emergency services.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the ground-launched cruise missile system at RAF Greenham Common is still subject to NATO unit assessments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The ground-launched cruise missile system at Greenham Common will remain subject to NATO evaluation until its withdrawal is complete.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the cost per annum to his Department of the ongoing off-base dispersal exercises in support of the ground-launched cruise missile system at RAF Greenham Common;

(2) what is the cost per annum to the Ministry of Defence police of the ongoing off-base dispersal exercises in support of the ground-launched cruise missile system at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice, for both operational and security reasons, to give information of this kind.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States Air Force makes any financial contribution to the costs of escorting vehicles involved in off-base dispersal exercises in support of the ground-launched cruise missile system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Apart from payments in lieu of rates to the local authority in respect of Greenham Common, the United States Air Force does not contribute to meeting the costs incurred by the civil police and Ministry of Defence police in escorting the ground-launched cruise missiles in off-base training deployments.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Lands Tribunal has started work on deciding levels of compensation for commoners with rights on RAF Greenham Common; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following our decison to proceed with the full extinguishment of the rights of common over RAF Greenham Common, we have now made a specific offer of compensation to the chairman of the commoners' committee. If we cannot agree appropriate levels of compensation it is then open to either party to refer the case to the Lands Tribunal.

RAF Exchange Pilots

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force exchange pilots are currently serving with units in the United States of America; and which aircraft types they are flying.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 32 RAF exchange pilots serving with units in the United States of America. Of these, 24 are in flying appointments. The aircraft they fly include fast jets, trainers, transports, helicopters, and refuelling aircraft.

US Air Force Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all exercises that are scheduled to take place in *(a)* the Coronet, *(b)* the Volant and *(c)* the Busy Brewer series of exercises at bases in the United Kingdom during 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Planning for these exercises is not yet complete. The Busy Brewer series of exercises is now known as Busy Warrior.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all exercises that took place in *(a)* the Coronet, *(b)* the Volant and *(c)* the Busy Brewer series of exercises at bases in the United Kingdom during 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The list of exercises is as follows:

Coronet Exercises 1989

		Base
Coronet Hoop	2 to 21 April	RAF Alconbury
Coronet Pine	20 May to 17 June	RAF Sculthorpe
Coronet Diamond	1 to 26 June	A&AEE Boscombe Down
Coronet Venom	22 June to 18 July	RAF Bentwaters
Coronet Python	25 August to 21 September	RAF Woodbridge

Volant Exercises 1989

	Date
Volant Gopher	4 to 7 June

Busy Warrior (former Busy Brewer) Exercises 1989

	Base
15 to 25 April	RAF Fairford
7 to 25 September	RAF Fairford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he, or any official in his Department, is consulted by the United States Air Force about scheduling of Coronet and Volant series exercises before the United States Air Forces Europe consolidated tasking schedule for the relevant year is produced.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Air-to-surface Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current North Atlantic Treaty Organisation requirement for tactical air-to-surface missiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Alliance has long made clear its commitment to keeping its forces, including nuclear forces, effective and up to date. Part of this process is the replacement of ageing free-fall nuclear bombs. The United Kingdom is considering both French and American options to replace its WE177 but, as yet, no decisions have been taken.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation requirement for tactical air-to-surface missiles was *(a)* first and *(b)* most recently publicly stated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Alliance has long made clear its intention to maintain adequate, effective and up-to-date nuclear forces and most recently reaffirmed this strategy at the October 1989 meeting of the nuclear planning group in Portugal.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any studies into the replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb have included air-launched missiles of a range greater than 400 km.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on the detailed specifications for weapons systems under consideration as possible future replacements for the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

F117A Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any proposals regarding a permanent or temporary deployment of F117A aircraft of the United States Air Force at any base in the United Kingdom or any United Kingdom-operated base overseas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

RAF Chicksands

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether RAF Chicksands is assigned to NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Chicksands provides communications support to United States armed forces in Europe, but is not itself assigned to NATO.

Submarine Personnel

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what regular medical checks are carried out on service personnel who have served on Her Majesty's submarines *(a)* during their service and *(b)* after they have left the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Before entering the submarine service Royal Navy personnel undergo various medical checks to ensure that they are fit to do so. Throughout their service they undergo regular routine preventive medical examinations, in common with all other RN personnel. About 10 per cent. of those submariners who serve in nuclear-powered submarines are classified as radiation workers, and they undergo routine medical surveillance as required by the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985.

Prior to leaving the service, a full assessment of the individual's naval medical history is made and a thorough medical examination is carried out. Subsequently, full medical records are available to the individual's general practitioner on request, including the classified radiation worker history where applicable.

Financial Planning

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he has made in *(a)* the role of the financial planning and management committee, *(b)* the chiefs of staff committee and *(c)* the long-term costings review for his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Cypriot Ferry Attack

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence following the attack on 25 February on a Cypriot ferry which RAF Wessex helicopters attended to rescue wounded, what information he has on the type, calibre and origin of the rounds which struck the ferry and the estimated size and nationality of the attacking vessel; which navies operating in the area have vessels of this size, carrying such armaments; why the RAF was scrambled to respond to this particular emergency; and what assessment he has made of the implications of this attack for British shipping in this area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The car ferry Baroness M was attacked in darkness on 24 February during one of her regular journeys between Larnaca, Cyprus and Jounieh, Lebanon. My understanding is that the ship is believed to have had Syrian markings but I am not in a position to confirm this. I am not able to comment on the size or type of vessel involved or the type of ammunition used in the attack. The RAF Wessex helicopters based in Cyprus include a search and rescue role among their duties and were well-placed to respond to the request for humanitarian assistance from the Baroness M. As to the implications of this attack for British shipping, I understand that as far as the General Council of British Shipping is aware, no British flagged ships trade with Lebanon or operate in the area where the attack took place.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the details and nature of the series of administrative errors, to which he referred in his letter to his hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on 30 January, a copy of which was placed in the Library, and which led to Mr. Colin Wallace's file of documents being mishandled.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the information given in the letter to which the hon. Member has referred.

Submarines

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how deep in the ground the cables for wires in the experimental trial ELF transmitter at Glen Garry forest will have to be buried: and if they will need to be buried in any particular medium;

(2) if he will place in the Library a map showing the area to be covered by the experimental trial ELF transmitter at Glen Garry forest including all access routes, and any areas from which the general public may have to be excluded;

(3) what assessment he has made of the environmental impact of a permanent installation based on the trial experimental ELF transmitter at Glen Garry forest;

(4) which roads will be used for access during the construction of the experimental trial ELF transmitter at Glen Garry forest; and whether any existing forest roads in the area will need to be extended, widened, or altered in any way.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 19 February, column *573*.

The detail of any proposals would be addressed in full in the notice of proposed development and supporting environmental impact assessment which would be submitted to Highland regional council, a copy of which would be placed in the Library at the appropriate time.

If a permanent installation were planned, a further environmental assessment would be made at the time.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Irradiated Food

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place in the Library a summary of the evidence he has about the safety of food irradiation.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the following reports, all of which are already in the Library of the House.

Report on the Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Food by the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods (published by the HMSO 1986).

Report of the Scientific Committee for Food (Eighteenth Series) (published by the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities, 1987).

Report on the Irradiation of Foodstuffs by the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities (published by the HMSO, 1990).

Food from Britain

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his plans for the future of Food from Britain.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to continue financial support for Food from Britain beyond the end of 1991.

Mr. Curry: I was pleased to announce on 9 February that the current arrangements for Government funding of Food from Britain would be extended until 1992-93. Under these arrangements Food from Britain will receive £3·5 million a year to cover establishment costs plus up to a further £1 million a year on the basis of £1 for every £3 contributed by industry in the previous year. It is now for the industry to demonstrate its commitment to Food from Britain by making full and best use of the services it offers.

Veterinary Product Licensing

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the new scale of fees for veterinary product licensing.

Mr. Maclean: The fees charged for veterinary medicines licensing operations have been reviewed to ensure that they recoup the full economic costs involved. Following informal discussions between my officials and the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH), I have received through hon. Members representations from several pharmaceutical companies criticising the proposed fee increases. Statutory consultation and further informal discussions are in hand.

British Apples

Mr. Stern: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Food From Britain will conduct an information campaign in schools to promote awareness of the readily available types of British apples.

Mr. Curry: Food From Britain's promotional activities are a matter between it and its prospective clients. However, I have no doubt that it would be more than happy to explore with the British apple industry the possibility of a joint venture to promote awareness of quality British apples.

Pesticide Data

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food where he stores his records of pesticide data following evaluation at Harpenden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Data supporting evaluations are retained at Harpenden.

North Sea (Dumping)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library any correspondence he has received from other countries concerning his applications to the Oslo commission to dump *(a)* waste waters from the synthesis of antibiotic and anti-ulcer medicines and *(b)* the chalk solution from sugar refining in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: My Department has received letters from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway concerning my intention to give a further licence for the first waste.

I am arranging to place copies in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library any correspondence he has had with the companies that dump industrial waste in the North sea concerning the agreements of the second North sea conference in 1987.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the meetings he has had with the companies that dump industrial waste in the North sea to discuss the agreements of the second North sea conference in 1987, giving the name of the company and date of meeting in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have not held any such meetings.

Food Imports (Cyprus)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions or correspondence he has had with the Cypriot authorities concerning pesticide residues in imported fruit and vegetables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We have asked the Cypriot authorities for comments on recent reports about pesticide residues in their fruit and vegetables.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will give the results of all tests on imported fruit and vegetables from Cyprus for pesticide residues in 1989, giving the type of residue found and the quantities;

(2) what tests he is currently carrying out on imported fruit and vegetables from Cyprus for the levels of pesticide residues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government undertake a continuous monitoring programme of fruit and vegetables from all sources, including Cyprus, to ensure that residue levels of pesticides do not exceed statutory levels contained in the Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988. The results are published; the latest report covering the period 1985 to 1988 was published by HMSO in 1989 (food surveillance paper No. 25).

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the fruit and vegetables that were imported into the United Kingdom from Cyprus in 1989, giving the quantities in each case.

Mr. Gummer: Provisional figures show that the quantities of the main fruit and vegetable crops imported from Cyprus during 1989 were as follows:

	Quantity (tonnes)
Potatoes (fresh or chilled)	90,746
Grapefruit (fresh or dried)	32,989
Citrus fruits	22,881
Lemons and limes (fresh or dried)	12,336
Vegetable products, chiefly used for human food, eg. locust beans	10,813
Grapes fresh	8,759
Grape juice (including grape must)	4,498
Carrots, turnips, salad beetroot, celeriac, salsify, radishes and similar edible roots	2,342
Mandarins (fresh or dried)	2,047
Citrus fruit (prepared or preserved)	1,042

Source: Customs and Excise.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amounts of money received from *(a)* farmers, *(b)* agro-chemical companies, *(c)* other parts of the agricultural industry and *(d)* other sources for the operation of (i) the farm and countryside service, (ii) the state veterinary service and (iii) the research and development service of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service for each year since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Sources of Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) income are not recorded in the form requested but in any event to provide them in that form would raise questions of commercial confidentiality.

Charging for ADAS services on a general scale was introduced with effect from April 1987 and the present service structure of ADAS also dates from that time. Income for the ADAS services for financial years since April 1987 is as follows:

	1987-88 (£ million)	*1988-89 (£ million)*	*1989-90 (10 months) (£ million)*
Farm and Countryside Service	8·9	10·4	10·6
State Veterinary Service	2·3	4·9	4·7
Research and Development Service	5·5	5·8	5·1
Total	16·7	21·1	20·4

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of participating farms have received a site inspection after acceptance on to the set-aside scheme; and how many of these site inspections have revealed breaches of *(a)* the set-aside regulations and *(b)* the guidelines for the management of fallow land.

Mr. Curry: The Community set-aside rules require member states to inspect a minimum of 5 per cent. of holdings on which land is being set aside under the scheme. It is not departmental policy to indicate the expected or achieved levels and inspection in the interests of proper enforcement. Information on the results of inspections in the first year of the scheme is not yet available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers indicated on their set-aside application forms that they had *(a)* applied for and *(b)* obtained planning permission for land entered under the non-agricultural use option of the set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: Applicants for set-aside are not required to give this information. However, the scheme literature draws attention to the requirement to obtain planning permission before the land is used for certain non-agricultural purposes.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area and what percentage of land set aside in each county in 1989 falls within less-favoured areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The information is available by MAFF division but not by county. It is as follows:

Division in which LFA land has been set-aside	*Area of LFA land set-aside (hectares)*	*Percentage of Division total of set-aside land*
Carlisle	15·4	12·7
Newcastle	561·7	47·3
Northallerton	50·5	3·3
Truro	25·7	6·0
Taunton	14·8	1·5

Note: The information relates to 1989 entrants only and is provisional.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the reduction in the 1989 United Kingdom cereal harvest due to the operation of the set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: The area of arable land set aside in the 1988-89 season represented about 1·2 per cent. of the United Kingdom arable area. The effect on the cereal harvest depends on assessments of what crop would otherwise have been grown on the land concerned and what the yield per hectare would have been. I shall be able to form a better view on this matter when I have the results of an evaluation of the scheme which has been commissioned by my Department from Reading university.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the impact of the set-aside scheme on agricultural employment in 1988 and 1989; and what is his estimate for 1990.

Mr. Curry: Levels of employment in agriculture are influenced by a number of factors, of which the existence of the set-aside scheme is only one. I will be in a position to form a judgment on the employment effects of set-aside when I have the results of an evaluation of the scheme being carried out which has been commissioned by my Department from Reading university.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of land in the non-agricultural use option of the set-aside scheme is being used for enterprises connected with *(a)* tourism, *(b)* recreation and *(c)* leisure.

Mr. Curry: The information is not available in the form requested. The information I have suggests that the majority of the land set aside to non-agricultural purposes is being used for horse-based activities, golf courses and sports fields.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will produce a breakdown by county of the number of participating farms and total set-aside areas for the second year of the scheme and options chosen per county for both years of the scheme.

Mr Gummer: The table shows a breakdown by English county of 1989 entrants and figures of United Kingdom uptake for 1989 compared with that for 1988. Information on land use options is not available broken down by county, but overall percentages for the two years are given in the table.

(a) Breakdown of 1989 entrants into set-aside scheme by English county

County	*Number of participants farms*	*Total area set-aside (hectares)*	*Average area per farm (hectares)*
Avon	13	384·75	29·60
Bedfordshire	31	1,125·00	36·29
Berkshire	21	1,152·43	54·88
Buckinghamshire	53	2,063·95	38·94
Cambridgeshire	48	1,695·00	35·31
Cheshire	11	207·67	18·88
Cleveland	3	59·34	19·78
Cornwall	18	421·48	23·42
Cumbria	6	120·07	20·01
Derbyshire	11	143·42	13·04
Devonshire	30	820·23	27·34
Dorset	18	467·64	25·98
Durham	6	297·67	49·61
Essex	65	2,346·45	36·10
Gloucestershire	38	2,526·73	66·49
Greater London	1	26·32	26·32
Greater Manchester	3	62·04	20·68
Hampshire	37	3,640·71	98·40
Hereford/Worcs	31	839·64	27·09
Hertfordshire	24	1,044·52	43·52
Humberside	24	924·49	38·52
Isle of Wight	3	130·02	43·34
Kent	58	2,301·57	39·68
Lancashire	6	95·74	15·96
Leicestershire	19	1,059·44	55·76
Lincolnshire	76	1,942·10	25·55
Merseyside	—	—	—
West Midlands	3	88·36	29·45
Norfolk	64	2,263·35	35·36
Northamptonshire	33	2,000·00	60·60
Northumberland	13	555·22	42·71
Nottinghamshire	12	348·96	29·08
Oxfordshire	66	3,912·43	59·28
Shropshire	9	241·62	26·85
Somerset	15	493·34	32·89
Staffordshire	15	542·01	36·13
Suffolk	86	1,943·11	22·59
Surrey	16	1,062·38	66·40
East Sussex	30	956·29	31·88
West Sussex	27	2,164·53	80·17
Tyne and Wear	4	179·70	44·92
Warwickshire	27	758·07	28·08
Wiltshire	38	1,572·17	41·37
North Yorkshire	36	1,326·40	36·84
South Yorkshire	5	44·19	8·84
West Yorkshire	4	28·17	7·04
Total England	1,157	46,378·72	40·09

Note: figures are provisional.

(b) United Kingdom uptake of the set-aside scheme distributed by country

	No. of farms			*Hectares of land set-aside*		
	1988 entrants	*1989 entrants*	*Cumulative total*	*1988 entrants*	*1989 entrants*	*Cumulative total*
England	1,327	1,157	2,484	41,175	46,379	87,554
Scotland	374	172	546	12,617	8,567	21,184
Wales	31	11	42	701	413	1,114
Northern Ireland	14	10	24	137	72	209
TOTAL United Kingdom	1,746	1,350	3,096	54,630	55,431	110,061

Note: Figures are provisional.

(c) Percentage of set-aside land used for the different land use options: United Kingdom figures.

	Percentage of total area set aside by entrants in each year	
	1988 entrants	1989 entrants
Permanent fallow	79	80
Rotational fallow	12	7
Woodland	2	2
Non-agricultural use	7	11

Veal Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by volume, value and country of origin imports of veal into the United Kingdom for each of the last four years.

Mr. Curry: The following table shows imports of veal into the United Kingdom between 1986 and 1989 by country of consignment. Figures for 1988 and 1989 exclude cuts of veal because of changes in the commodity coding.

	Tonnes	*£000*
1986		
France	42	112
Netherlands	3,699	12,648
Federal Republic of Germany	76	154
Irish Republic	248	441
Denmark	38	85
Uruguay	12	21
1987		
France	11	22
Netherlands	2,925	10,954
Federal Republic of Germany	9	27
Irish Republic	294	599
Australia	27	59
1988		
France	300	713
Netherlands	1,066	4,630
Federal Republic of Germany	290	585
Italy	57	104
Irish Republic	4,071	10,418
Denmark	22	70
Bahrain	[2]—	1
Australia	12	51
Canada	2	5
United States of America	104	277

	Tonnes	*£000*
1989[1]		
France	208	668
Belgium/Luxembourg	8	18
Netherlands	765	3,095
Federal Republic of Germany	167	335
Irish Republic	3,734	10,437
Denmark	14	60
Spain	19	38
Sweden	[2]—	[2]—
Australia	6	32
United States of America	22	76

Source: Customs and Excise

[1] Figures are provisional and cover the period January to November (the latest for which data in this detail are readily available).

[2] denotes less than half units shown.

Low-fat and Dairy Spreads

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations for a change in the law to bring the contents of low-fat and dairy spreads into line with current laws covering water and vitamin content of butter and margarine; and whether he has any plans to discuss the subject with interested parties.

Mr. Curry: I have received numerous representations from interested parties during the recent consultation period on the Ministry discussion paper on yellow fats legislation. The views of the food advisory committee are being sought before I decide how to proceed, but interested parties will be given an opportunity to comment on any proposed changes to existing legislation.

Sheep Farmers

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep farmers in each of the counties in England have flocks of over 1,000 ewes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Information on flock sizes is not available in the form requested.

Food (Pesticide Residues)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of correspondence he has had since 1 February with food retailers and manufacturers about pesticide residues in food.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much he has allocated on research into food spoilage and applied nutrition for each of the last five years, including the current year; and how much he estimates will be spent in 1990-91.

Mr. Gummer: Details of my Department's expenditure on food spoilage and applied nutrition in 1988-89 are contained in a report to the priorities board for R and D in agriculture and food which I have placed in the Library of the House. For 1989-90 and 1990-91 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 19 February, *Official Report*, column *576*. Information for earlier years is not readily available.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 2 March 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline the effect of the financial arrangements for the capital requirements of grant-maintained schools on the capital spending budget for the local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend pays 100 per cent. grant to a grant-maintained school for approved expenditure on capital projects. There is no recovery of such payments from the local education authority. In addition, the Department sets annual capital guidelines for education for each LEA. These guidelines do not take account of capital grant to GM schools in an authority's area. It is for each LEA to decide capital spending on its schools in the light of local needs and circumstances, and LEAs are free, within the flexibilities of the Local Government Acts, to spend above the level of their annual capital guidelines from capital receipts and other resources.

Books (Romania)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any requests from Romania *(a)* to replace historic and academic books lost in fires during the Romanian revolution and *(b)* to supply textbooks for schoolchildren learning English as a second language.

Mr. Jackson: Any such requests would normally be directed to the British Council.

The British Council received an appeal for replacement books from the director of the central university library, Bucharest, but the following action was already being taken:

i. Following an appeal by four British academics Richard Crampton, Richard Clogg, Dennis Deletant and Stevan Pavlowitch, 250,000 books have been donated by the general public and publishers, and the British Council is paying for the transportation of the books to Romania. The British Council is also supplying books and library equipment direct to the central university library and other university libraries.

ii. No specific requests for books for schoolchildren learning English as a second language have been received but among the books going out are English language books. A main area of activity for the British Council in Romania has always been support for English language teaching, in particular to university English language departments. It is hoped that this can be expanded in the future.

GCSE

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consult the representatives of headmasters in the state and independent sectors in order to hear their assessment of the effect of GCSE examinations taking place earlier in the academic year.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has already received a number of representations from head teachers on this matter. The joint council for the GCSE is itself considering a consultation of all centres offering the GCSE. My right hon. Friend will expect to discuss with it the outcomes of that consultation.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consult the GCSE examining groups, the joint council for the GCSE and other relevant bodies with a view to ending the practice whereby GCSE examinations are taking place earlier in the summer term.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is asking for a meeting with the joint council to discuss this matter.

National Curriculum

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline the phases to which he referred in his reply of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *796*, covering the implementation of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The phases of implementation of the national curriculum and related assessment arrangements are set out in the table:

National curriculum timetable
Introduction of attainment targets and programmes of study
Autumn

	Pupils aged			
	5 years	*7-8 years*	*11-12 years*	*14-15 years*
1989	Mathematics Science English	—	Mathematics Science	—
1990	Technology	Mathematics Science English Technology	English Technology	—
1991	History Geography	History Geography	History Geography	—

	Pupils aged			
	5 years	*7-8 years*	*11-12 years*	*14-15 years*
1992	Art Music Physical education	Art Music Physical education	Modern foreign language Art Music Physical education	Mathematics Science English
1993	—	—	—	Technology
1994	—	—	—	History Geography
1995	—	—	—	Modern foreign language Art Music Physical education

Timetables for history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, music and physical education are provisional.

None of the attainment targets and programmes of study in maths, science and English will be a *requirement* for pupils with statements of special educational needs until autumn 1990. This gives time for their statements to be revised if necessary.

First national assessments
Summer

	Pupils aged			
	7 years	*11 years*	*14 years*	*16 years*
1991	Mathematics Science English	—	—	—
1992	Technology	—	Mathematics Science	—
1993	History Geography	—	English Technology	—
1994	Art Music Physical education	Mathematics Science English Technology	History Geography	Mathematics Science English
1995	—	History Geography	Modern foreign language Art Music Physical education	Technology
1996	—	Art Music Physical education	—	History Geography
1997	—	—	—	Modern foreign language Art Music Physical education

Individual pupils' results in any statutory assessments or public examinations will have to be reported to their parents from 1991 onwards. Schools will not be required to publish statistics of key stage 1 assessments, though they will be encouraged to do so. They will be required to publish statistics of key stage 2 and 3 assessments, but only from the second year of operation onwards. For key stage 4, they will already be under a requirement to publish GCSE results.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of passenger traffic to the continent he estimates will eventually use the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: Eurotunnel expects 43·9 million passengers to use the tunnel in 2003, 36 per cent. of passenger traffic to and from the continent.

London Roads Assessment

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many letters he had received by 23 February from residents living in London *(a)* in support and *(b)* opposed to the London roads assessment options; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what has been, for the latest available date, the number of letters that his Department has received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* in opposition to the London roads assessment options; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It will take a little time to collate and analyse the responses received. The outcome will be announced as soon as possible.

Quarterly Statistics

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations informed the decision to discontinue bus and coach data from quarterly transport statistics and replace them by information on United Kingdom-registered goods vehicles carried on roll-on roll-off ferries from Great Britain to mainland Europe.

Mr. Portillo: As part of the Government's continuing objective of lessening the burden on industry of responding to surveys, it has been decided that the quarterly monitoring of bus and coach operators' performance is no longer required for Department of Transport purposes. The decision to include in the quarterly transport statistics information on United Kingdom-registered goods vehicles carried on roll-on roll-off ferries to mainland Europe was made by the editor.

The performance of the bus and coach industry will continue to be monitored on an annual basis, and will be included in the Department's annual publication, "Transport Statistics Great Britain". More detailed information will be available in the annual specialised publication, "Bus and Coach Statistics".

Train Accidents

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of train accidents caused by technical defects in 1989; and what was the comparable number for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1987.

Mr. Portillo: The number of train accidents caused by technical defects in 1989 is not yet available. For 1979, 1983 and 1987 the numbers were respectively 244, 276 and 268.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the underlying rate of inflation in each member state of the European Community at the latest available date.

Mr. Ryder: The inflation rates given in the table exclude estimates of home owners' costs and are, therefore, more comparable across countries:

12-month growth rate of consumer prices in the European Community

	December 1989[1]
United Kingdom[2]	6·1
Germany	2·6
France	3·6
Italy	6·4
Belgium	3·6
Denmark	4·8
Greece	14·8
Ireland	4·2
Luxembourg	3·9
Netherlands	1·0
Portugal	11·6
Spain	6·6

[1] Except United Kingdom, Germany and Italy (January 1990), and Ireland (1989, 4th quarter).

[2] United Kingdom figure is for RPI excluding mortgage interest payments (MIPs). Where other countries include estimates of home owners' housing costs, these have been excluded to put figures on a more comparable basis.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Poland

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the Government have so far committed from the £50 million know-how fund for Poland; and how much they expect to spend in the current financial year.

Mrs. Chalker: Possible commitments on projects financed under the £50 million know-how fund for Poland now stand at around £18·3 million. We expect to spend approximately £2·3 million in the current financial year.

Oban-Korup National Park

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the Cameroons on the need to prevent commercial logging companies logging in the Oban-Korup national park.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to the Governments of France and Germany about French and German timber companies logging in and near the Korup rain forest in Cameroon; and if he will make a statement on the consequences of such action for Her Majesty's Government's aid policy.

Mrs. Chalker: No logging is permitted in Korup national park itself. The recent press reports have been about licences granted for logging in the buffer zone around Korup. Under Cameroonian law these licences should not have been granted without prior consultation with local government leaders and village chiefs in the interests of preserving economically important trees, water supplies and traditional hunting zones in the vicinity of each village. We share the concern of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) that recent logging activities may not have been subject to this condition and may be detrimental to the WWF's Korup project, which is being partly funded from the British aid programme.

The British embassy in Yaounde has already expressed its concern to the Cameroonian Ministry of Agriculture and the ambassador is being instructed to raise the matter formally at ministerial level. Meanwhile we are assured by the Cameroon authorities that existing licences for exploitation within the Korup buffer zone were issued before the establishment of the national park and that no new licences will be issued for exploitation within the zone.

We are now considering whether it would be desirable to make demarches to the Governments of countries whose logging companies are active in the vicinity of Korup, bearing it in mind that the powers of those Governments in respect of private companies may be strictly limited.

Children (Vaccination)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions Britain has made in the last year to the vaccination of children in developing countries against the main killer diseases.

Mrs. Chalker: We support immunisation programmes through the United Nations Children's Fund, to which we contributed £8·4 million in 1989-90. In the same period we provided £200,000 to the Polio Plus Campaign run by Rotary International and £64,000 to the WHO Cold Chain Support Unit. In addition, many of the bilateral primary health care projects we fund and the 315 health projects run by non-governmental organisations, which we support under our joint funding scheme, include an immunisation component.

International Organisations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those international organisations to which the United Kingdom is affiliated which grant or lend money, giving the United Kingdom's latest annual contributions where applicable in each case.

Mrs. Chalker: The international organisations and the United Kingdom contributions paid for from the overseas aid programme showing the amounts paid in 1988 (the latest year for which full data are available), are as follows:

United Kingdom contribution in 1988

Organisation	*£'000*
UN Agencies[1]	
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	2,564
UN Development Programme (UNDP)	24,500
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) General Programme	3,750
UNICEF Special Appeals	8,473
UN Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA)	5,250
UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)	3,500
UNHCR (Special Appeals)	15,970
UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)	2,804
UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)	5,250
World Food Programme (WFP)	4,856
World Health Organisation (WHO) Research Programmes	11,407
Other UN development agencies	2,561
World Bank Group	
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)	6,561
International Development Association (IDA)	207,000
International Finance Corporation (IFC)	3,558
Regional Development Banks	
African Development Bank	329
African Development Fund	6,374
Asian Development Bank	1,172
Asian Development Fund	13,045
Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)	200
CDB Special Development Fund	3,517
Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)	1,491
IADB Fund for Special Operations	3,002
International Monetary Fund[2]	
Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility	8,500
European Community[3]	
European Development Fund	119,004
International research organisations	
Agricultural and medical research	6,915
Other international organisations[4]	9,772

[1] Excludes UN bodies whose activities benefit both developing and developed countries and where United Kingdom subscriptions relate only partly to developmental activities.

[2] Contributions to the IMF's general resources account form part of the United Kingdom reserves.

[3] Excludes overseas aid paid for from the EC budget and from European Investment Bank's own resources.

[4] Includes such Commonwealth programmes as the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation and Commonwealth Youth Programme; and contributions to South Pacific Commission.

Source: British Aid Statistics 1984-1988, Table 8 (a copy of which is in the Library of the House).

THE ARTS

Museums

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister for the Arts what provision he has made for the refurbishment of museums in the current year.

Mr. Luce: The grant in aid in 1989-90 for the building and maintenance programme of the national museums and galleries which I sponsor was £48 million. I announced on 16 November 1989 that the provision would rise to £57 million in 1990-91; in 1992-93 the provision will be £64 million, a rise of 34 per cent. over the three years.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The Three Graces

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will further defer a decision on the application for a licence to export Antonio Canova's The Three Graces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: After consultation with my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, I have decided to extend the present period of deferral for the application for a licence to export The Three Graces until Wednesday 4 April.

Export control procedures affecting heritage items have been under review, including the policy of deferring a decision on an export licence application to enable a United Kingdom public institution to make an offer to purchase. As a result, I propose henceforth to take account of an offer from any source, whether public or private. I am ready to consider any representations by persons affected by this change of policy, which will apply both to new applications and to outstanding applications such as The Three Graces; other deferrals, including those for interim review, due to expire before 4 April will also be extended to that date.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *781*, and to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *783*, if he will list which organisations or

individuals within the borough of Sunderland made representations to him opposing the recommencement of shipbuilding at the Southwick shipyard.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: Representations have been made in private discussions questioning whether a return to shipbuilding some years hence, and the uncertainties that must be inherent in such a proposal, represents the best prospect for the long-term development of Sunderland and of the sites in question.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what legal basis the European Commission has to approve or disapprove the sale of land within the United Kingdom to companies within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: Article 222 EEC states that

"This Treaty should in no way prejudice the rules in Member States governing the system of property ownership".

However, the Commission of the European Communities, acting under articles 92-93 EEC and any relevant Community legal instruments, may include conditions on the use of land as part of the terms on which it approves state aid where such use is material to the case concerned. Thus, for example, the payment of closure aid for shipbuilding allows the Commission to impose conditions on the use of the site concerned, and that would need to be reflected in any subsequent disposal of that land.

Biotechnology

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to control the purchase of biotechnology companies by agrochemical companies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 28 February 1990]*: There are no grounds for intervention to distort market mechanisms in the purchase of biotechnology companies. Small, research-based firms in biotechnology cannot take ideas through to commercial production alone; purchase by an established company can provide the significant extra resource needed.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to ban the patenting of genetically manipulated animals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 28 February 1990]*: As I indicated to the hon. Gentleman in my answer of 16 January 1990 (*Hansard*, column *187*, Vol 165, No 31), a European Community proposal for a directive on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions would, if adopted, confirm that patent applications for inventions concerned with genetically manipulated animals would be granted, provided other patentability criteria were met.

Discussions on this proposal are continuing, however, and the Government will take a view on it at the appropriate time.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to assess the chlorofluorocarbon recycling technology developed by Volvo in Sweden to evaluate its applicability to British industry.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: The DTI commissioned a major study in 1989 to assess the options for CFC recovery, recycling and disposal. This study will provide us with an assessment of commercially proven recycling technologies and their applicability to the United Kingdom industry.

WALES

Health Care

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *551*, whose budget any follow-up treatment will be under if a patient who has been referred to a treatment centre outside his/her own health authority to receive initial treatment, is examined at facilities other than the said treatment centre following the agreement of the referring consultant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: If, with the agreement of the referring consultant, a patient from a treatment centre receives follow-up treatment in his or her home health authority, then the cost will be charged to that authority. This will still leave the referring authority with a net financial benefit in most instances since the cost of operating on the patient will have been borne by the treatment centre.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans there are with regard to the non-geriatric care currently provided to patients from Wales by the five community hospitals in Shropshire health authority, following their being sold off and converted to private nursing homes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what will happen to patients from Wales who are receiving care at the five hospitals in the Shropshire health authority when those hospitals are sold off and converted into private nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 23 February. If Shropshire health authority should decide to proceed with its proposals to change the use of some of its cottage hospitals, it will be required to consult all interested parties, including those Welsh health authorities whose residents may have cause to use the facilities. Welsh health authorities would need to consider what alternative provision might need to be made in the light of any such consultation exercise being undertaken.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to increase the funding for kidney transplants at Cardiff royal infirmary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Proposals from South Glamorgan health authority to increase kidney transplant provision at Cardiff royal infirmary are presently being considered by the Welsh Office.

Education Grants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the grants made in Wales under section 21 of the Education Act 1980, since that Act came into force,

indicating the year in which each grant was made, the amount of each grant, the local authority to whose area each grant applied, and the specific purpose to which each grant was to be directed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the information requested and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Sewage

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the amounts of raw sewage that were returned to land during the recent coastal storms in north Wales; and what steps have subsequently been taken to decontaminate areas polluted by such sewage.

Mr. Grist: The area of Towyn, Rhyl, Kinmel bay and Abergele is sewered by short sea outfalls and it is estimated that some 50,000 litres of sewage is produced per day. Until tidal surges penetrated the sea wall at Towyn, the sewage flow continued to discharge to the sea. Soon after the wall was breached, power supplies were lost and any sewage pumping would have ceased. Gravity discharges would also have ceased because there was no longer any free discharge. After the majority of the population from the affected parts of Towyn was evacuated to dry areas, sewage generation would largely have stopped in that area. Sewage from surrounding areas would have continued to flow, however, and this sewage would have been mixed with the incoming sea water. It is not possible to say whether the sewage discharged through the outfalls or escaped into the mass of flood water through drains and manholes but it is probable that quantities of sewage are present in the flood water and the proportion of sewage will increase the longer the flood waters remain. The sewage will have been diluted both by the rainfall during the period and, to a much greater extent, by the invading sea water. A small number of properties are on cesspits and septic tanks and the contents of these tanks will by now have mixed with the flood water.

Responsibility for the possible public health consequences of the flood and therefore for the clean-up operation rests with the appropriate environmental health officer who has powers to take such action as he deems fit to reduce any risk to human health.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport West, *Official Report*, 23 February, column *933*, regarding the export criteria set out, since 1979, whether any plutonium has been exported to *(a)* the United States of America from the United Kingdom not kept under safeguards, and *(b)* to Japan from the United Kingdom which was not produced in the United Kingdom or an EEC member state; how much plutonium was exported to Canada in 1983; and from which reactor or reactors this came.

Mr. Baldry: Exports of unsafeguarded plutonium are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

During the period mentioned by the hon. Member, plutonium from the reprocessing of irradiated fuel from a Japanese reactor has been returned to Japan.

The plutonium returned to Canada in 1983 was produced from the reprocessing of irradiated fuel from the Calder Hall and Chapelcross reactors. The plutonium was brought under safeguards after extraction from the irradiated fuel and prior to its export to Canada for civil purposes. The amount involved cannot be disclosed for reasons of commercial confidentiality but is included in the overall total given in the reply by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 17 January 1989 at column *157*.

South Africa (Oil Imports)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish his report on whether the tanker Almarc Terza broke the guidelines on oil exported to South Africa.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have nothing to add to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 11 January 1990, at columns *693-94*.

Nuclear Energy (Safeguards)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assistance the United Kingdom has afforded the International Atomic Energy Agency in developing safeguards expertise under the provisions of article 12 of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom carries out a safeguards research and development programme in support of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The programme is carried out by AEA technology and currently costs approximately £1 million per year; the costs are borne by my Department.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if Her Majesty's Government have ever made available details of technical studies conducted on safeguards implementation at United Kingdom nuclear reprocessing plants to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. BNFL and the UKAEA provide technical studies to the IAEA when agreeing safeguards approaches for their facilities; these naturally include reprocessing issues. A safeguards research and development programme is carried out for the IAEA by the UKAEA and this involves some work on plant reprocessing studies. In addition, the international study group on large scale commercial plant reprocessing (LASCAR), in which the United Kingdom is involved, provides technical guidance to the IAEA.

The information given to the IAEA on reprocessing plant safeguards is either commercially sensitive or has security implications.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. John Harker

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has received the file of information relating to the case of Mr. John Harker, a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Kirkham; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he intends to notify the hon. Member for Stockton, South about the outcome of his Department's inquiry into the case of Mr. John Harker.

Mr. John Patten: A reply was sent on 26 January to my hon. Friend acknowledging recent representations from Mr. Harker. The representations are under consideration and a further letter will be sent as soon as the examination of the case is complete.

Deportation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations his private office has received requesting arbitration on a decision of the Chief Immigration Officer to deport individuals from the United Kingdom since the introduction of the system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. The "Guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases" describe the way in which Home Office Ministers exercise their responsibilities for implementing an effective and efficient immigration control. A copy of the guidelines is available in the Library.

Electoral Law

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to reform election law to give homeless persons the right to vote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, to be entitled to vote a person must be resident at an address in a constituency or electoral area on the qualifying date and must be registered there. We have no plans to change this requirement.

Crime Victims

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will amend existing legislation to enable victims of crimes or their representatives to exercise the same right to a hearing for a retrial in the Court of Appeal as that given to a convicted criminal when new evidence is produced and a miscarriage of justice has been established.

Mr. John Patten: The victim's charter we published on 22 February—a copy of which is in the Library—sets out some questions for discussion including whether the victim could or should be given some opportunity to be heard in court. As the charter explains, we have no immediate proposals for change, but would welcome views. We could not however support a change which would enable the victim to call into question an acquittal, which would violate the principle that a person who has been acquitted should not be tried a second time.

Members' Inquiries

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long he expects to take to answer questions from hon. Members about constituents in prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We aim to answer all correspondence from hon. Members as quickly as possible. At present, the average time taken to reply to hon. Members' letters on prison issues, including those about constituents in prison, is 31 days.

Football

Miss. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis showing *(a)* when the national football intelligence unit of the Metropolitan police will be fully operational, *(b)* what is the staffing level of the unit and *(c)* what is its annual budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The national football intelligence unit's staff (one superintendent, one inspector, one sergeant, three constables and one typist) has been at work since December 1989. Its computer support is expected to be operational shortly. Its budget for the financial year 1990-91 is £300,000. These matters do not fall within the responsibility of the Commissioner.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to provide easier methods for the fostering in the United Kingdom of children orphaned in the Romanian revolution.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no provision in the immigration rules for children from overseas to come to the United Kingdom to be fostered. However, children adopted in Romania, or coming to the United Kingdom from Romania for adoption, may be admitted provided that careful inquiries into the circumstances of both the child and the prospective parents show that the proposed adoption is in the child's best interests. These inquiries are necessary to ensure that children adopted from overseas are protected in the same way as children adopted in the United Kingdom.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of hepatitis B infection in prisoners have been reported since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: Cases have been reported for statistical purposes only since 1984. The latest information is given in the table:

Hepatitis B: Prisoners requiring treatment or special precautions

Reporting period	*Acute cases*	*Chronic cases (carriers)*
1 January 1984 to 31 March 1985[1]	152	240
1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986	165	295
1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987	150	285
1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988	155	198
1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989	105	242

[1] 15 months.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if prisoners are informed of or offered vaccination against hepatitis B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Vaccination policy for prisoners is modelled on practice in the general community. Prison medical officers decide which prisoner patients should be offered vaccination, using their clinical judgment and having regard to guidelines issued by the director of prison medical services. The guidelines recommend that medical officers consider offering vaccination to those prisoners who are identified as belonging to a high risk behaviour group and who are expected to remain in the prison system long enough to complete the six-month course.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action his Department has taken to prevent the spread of hepatitis B in prison;

(2) what instructions his Department issues to prison governors regarding combating the spread of hepatitis B.

Mr. Mellor: Our measures include medical inquiry and examination at the reception stage, selective vaccination on a voluntary basis, education and counselling, and limited regime restrictions for identified hepatitis B carriers at the discretion of the prison medical officer.

Governors have an important part to play in facilitating educational initiatives within the resources available to them. They have been encouraged to make wide use of the prison service education package "AIDS Inside and Out", which provides a context for the delivery of important messages relevant to the prevention of hepatitis B infection.

Broadcasting

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement about the transitional arrangements to be made in the Broadcasting Bill for existing cable systems other than broad band cable franchise holders.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) announced our proposals on the future licensing arrangements for local delivery systems, including SMATV systems, on 27 April last year. The transitional arrangements we are envisaging are to be seen against the background of those proposals.

As those proposals made clear, systems covering fewer than 1,000 homes will not need to be licensed by the Independent Television Commission under the new arrangements. This proposal will be implemented, subject to parliamentary approval, by the making of a designation order under the provisions of clause 65(1) of the Broadcasting Bill. Accordingly, any existing SMATV licences for systems covering fewer than 1,000 homes will lapse when the relevant provisions of the Bill are brought into force. Any existing unlicensed systems covering fewer than 1,000 homes will be able to continue in operation. Any system covering fewer than 1,000 homes, whether previously licensed by the Cable Authority or not, will be able to carry BBC services, services regulated by the ITC, S4C and services originating from a Council of Europe or convention country.

SMATV systems licensed to cover 1,000 homes or more, and which fall wholly or partly within a cable franchise area (ie an area covered by a prescribed diffusion service licence issued by the Cable Authority by the time the relevant provisions of the Bill are brought into force), will continue to be able to operate under their existing licences while they remain in force. The ITC will be empowered to extend those licences if necessary until such a time as it is satisfied that the broad band cable operator is able to offer an alternative service to the homes passed by the SMATV system.

SMATV systems licensed to cover more than 1,000 homes, which fall wholly outside any cable franchise area, will be deemed to have a local delivery licence starting from the date on which the relevant provisions of the Bill are brought into force. This licence will last for five years, and will be renewable under the provisions of clause 71 of the Broadcasting Bill after three years. The percentage of qualifying revenue for the purposes of clause 67 will be deemed to be zero. Licensees will not be granted the use of MVDS frequencies.

Systems covering more than 1,000 homes which carry only the four terrestrial channels, and which are in consequence unlicensed at present, will continue to be able to operate without the need for an ITC licence while they carry only those channels.

Other unlicensed systems covering more than 1,000 homes (including systems carrying the IBA's DBS services) which have not previously been licensed as SMATV systems by the Cable Authority will, if they fall wholly or partly within a cable franchise area, be deemed to have a SMATV licence under the terms of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. This licence will be deemed to start on the day when the relevant provisions of the Bill are brought into force, and to last for five years. The ITC will be empowered to extend the licence until such a time as it is satisfied that the broad band cable operator is able to offer an alternative service to the homes passed by the system.

Unlicensed systems meeting the same criteria which fall wholly outside cable franchise areas will be deemed to have a local delivery licence starting from the date on which the relevant provisions of the Bill are brought into force. The terms of this licence will be the same as those described outlined above in relation to SMATV systems which will be deemed to have local delivery licences.

The provisions necessary to implement these proposals will be included in the Broadcasting Bill. Subject to parliamentary approval, we are planning that the proposals will come into effect on 1 January 1991.

Blundeston Prison

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on current staffing levels at Her Majesty's prison, Blundeston, in the light of the 1988 fresh start agreements.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 February 1990]:* There are at present 140 officers (including senior and principal officers) in post; regional management's target level is 146 for 1989-90 and it plans to post a further six officers to Blundeston this month.

PRIME MINISTER

Regional Development

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received about regional development in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: The Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry, for Scotland and for Wales receive regular representations on regional industrial development.

Zoonoses

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received about zoonoses.

The Prime Minister: I have not received any such recent representations. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health keeps these diseases under review.

Heritage

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on built heritage.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend and I receive representations frequently. The built heritage makes a particularly important contribution both to the quality of life within our communities and to the tourism industry. The Government are concerned to ensure that the nation's wealth of important buildings, monuments and sites are preserved wherever possible.

Global Warming

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what current involvement the United Kingdom has in *(a)* the international geosphere-biosphere project and *(b)* the world climate research programme, in regard to research conducted into global warming and the greenhouse effect.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology's report on the greenhouse effect which gives full details of the important contribution the research councils and the Meteorological Office are making to these international research programmes.

Clockwork Orange

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, further to her reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 27 February, when General Sir Frank King made it clear to her that he did not recall any project specifically named Clockwork Orange.

The Prime Minister: General Sir Frank King and General Sir Peter Leng gave that information to officials on Saturday 17 February.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, further to her reply of 27 February, whether any projects not specifically named Clockwork Orange but of a similar intent or nature were known to Her Majesty's Government or military officers.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the information given by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces during the Adjournment debate on 6 February at columns 866-68.

Environment (International Co-operation)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), *Official Report*, 22 February, columns *872-73*, how the figures of *(a)* £3 million United Kingdom annual contribution to the United Nations environment programme and *(b)* £100 million United Kingdom contribution over three years to the conservation of tropical forests were reached.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom more than doubled its contribution to UNEP in 1989 in recognition of the increasing awareness and importance of international environmetal issues and the need to strengthen UNEP's capacity to meet these challenges.

In deciding to commit a further £109 million of bilateral aid over the next three years as part of Britain's help to conserve tropical forests we took account of the global significance of the issue, the way in which we judge the United Kingdom is equipped to help effectively in this field, the scope for contribution from other aid donors and other pressures on our aid programme resources.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what policies she has formulated in regard to *(a)* aid to promote democratic development, *(b)* aid to support educational development, *(c)* aid to support environmental improvement and *(d)* aid to support energy efficiency and security in the countries of eastern Europe following political changes in these states in the past six months.

The Prime Minister: On 22 January, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced a single know-how fund for eastern Europe. This included our existing commitments to Poland (£50 million) and Hungary (£25 million), and new money would be made available to finance help to other eastern European countries once they are fully committed to reform.

So far we have made detailed plans in respect of Poland, where we expect to spend some £2·3 million in the current financial year. Proposals are being worked out for assistance in the energy sector, and will look, among other things, at the issues of energy efficiency and the reduction of environmental pollution from power stations. The Polish authorities have also asked for assistance with the creation of new language teacher training institutes, for advice on educational reform, and an exploratory mission will be visiting Poland this month. We have also enabled groups of politicians from Poland and Hungary to participate in seminars on the United Kingdom's parliamentary system organised by the Great Britain/east Europe centre, training in media techniques, and training directly relevant to the local government elections to be held in Poland in April.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tourism

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the review of tourist policy in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Following the publication of the tourism policy document "Tourism in Northern Ireland—A View

to the Future" in June last year, considerable work has been undertaken to implement the proposals it contained. A number of the measures, including a new scheme of financial assistance, have already been introduced and work is in hand on the preparation of the new legislation which will be required to give effect to the full range of the proposals.

Public Houses

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants are available for the provision of accommodation in public houses.

Mr. Needham: A new scheme of selective financial assistance will be available from 2 April 1990 to private sector projects providing additional tourist accommodation or upgrading existing facilities. Assistance in the form of interest relief grants or loans will be offered to projects which can demonstrate the potential to achieve more holiday visitors to Northern Ireland, leading to additional revenue and/or employment. Public house developments which meet those criteria will be considered. Projects in Belfast and Londonderry may also qualify for urban development grant in appropriate cases.

Prisoners

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons in Northern Ireland are presently serving sentences of detention at the pleasure of the Secretary of State; of these how many are for *(a)* murder and *(b)* other serious offences; and of these how many were admitted members of (i) the Ulster Defence Association, (ii) the Ulster Freedom Fighters, (iii) the Ulster Volunteer Force, (iv) the RUC, (v) other loyalist paramilitary groups, (vi) the Official Irish Republican Army, (vii) the Provisional Irish Republican Army, (viii) the Irish National Liberation Army, (ix) other Roman Catholic paramilitary groups, (x) any junior wing by each category of the foregoing and (xi) none of the above, at the time the crime was committed.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The sentence of detention at the pleasure of the Secretary of State can be imposed only in cases of murder. Twenty-five prisoners are currently serving such sentences. At the time of conviction, their paramilitary affiliation was as follows:

Paramilitary affiliation	*Number convicted*
Ulster Defence Association	3
Ulster Volunteer Force	1
Provisional Irish Republican Army	16
None	5

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons serving *(a)* a life sentence for murder, *(b)* a life sentence for other serious crime and *(c)* a sentence at the pleasure of the Secretary of State have been released from prison in Northern Ireland in each of the last 10 years; of these, how many were admitted members of each paramilitary or terrorist group or their junior wing when the crime was committed; if he will indicate the periods served; and if he will set out the information in a table.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

Indeterminate sentence prisoners released by affiliation and years served (1 January 1980—31 December 1989)
Numbers released by years served
Less than 10 years

Year and affiliation	*A*	*B*	*C*
1980			
PIRA	—	1	—
None	—	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	1	1
UVF	1	—	—
None	—	1	—
1982			
UVF	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
1983			
UVF	—	1	—
UDA	—	—	2
None	—	—	—
1984			
UVF	1	—	—
1985			
UDA	—	—	3
UVF	—	—	1
PIRA	1	—	—
OIRA	1	—	1
1986			
UDA	—	—	3
UVF	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	2
None	1	—	—
1987			
UVF	—	—	1
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1988			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	1
PIRA	1	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1989			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
Total	7	4	15

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

10 years

Year and affiliation	*A*	*B*	*C*
1980			
PIRA	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—

Year and affiliation	A	B	C
1982			
UVF	—	—	—
None	1	—	1
1983			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1984			
UVF	—	—	—
1985			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	1	—	1
PIRA	—	—	1
OIRA	—	—	—
1986			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	2
PIRA	1	—	1
None	1	—	—
1987			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	1	—
PIRA	1	1	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1988			
UDA	—	—	1
UVF	1	—	—
PIRA	1	—	—
OIRA	1	—	—
None	—	—	—
1989			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
Total	10	2	7

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

11 years

Year and affiliation	A	B	C
1980			
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1982			
UVF	—	—	—
None	1	1	—
1983			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1984			
UVF	—	—	—
1985			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
1986			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1987			
UVF	2	—	1
UDA	—	—	1
PIRA	—	—	3
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	1	—
1988			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1989			
UVF	1	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	1	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
Total	6	2	6

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

12 years

Year and affiliation	A	B	C
1980			
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1982			
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1983			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
1984			
UVF	—	—	—
1985			
UDA	1	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
1986			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1987			
UVF	2	—	1
UDA	1	—	—

Year and affiliation	A	B	C
PIRA	—	—	3
OIRA	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
1988			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	2
PIRA	1	—	1
OIRA	2	—	—
None	1	—	—
1989			
UVF	1	1	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	1
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
Total	11	1	8

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

13 years

Year and affiliation	A	B	C
1980			
PIRA	—	1	—
None	—	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1982			
UVF	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
1983			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1984			
UVF	—	—	—
1985			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
1986			
UDA	—	—	1
UVF	—	—	—
OIRA	1	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1987			
UVF	2	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	1	1	1
OIRA	1	—	—
None	—	—	—
1988			
UDA	2	—	—
UVF	3	—	1
PIRA	—	—	1
OIRA	—	—	—
None	1	—	—
1989			
UVF	2	1	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	1	—	1
OIRA	1	—	—
None	—	—	—
Total	16	2	5

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

14 years

Year and affiliation	A	B	C
1980			
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1982			
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1983			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1984			
UVF	—	—	—
1985			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
1986			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1987			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	1	—	—
OIRA	1	—	—
None	—	—	—
1988			
UDA	3	—	—
UVF	3	—	—
PIRA	—	—	1
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1989			
UVF	6	—	—
UDA	4	—	—
PIRA	1	—	1
OIRA	1	—	—
None	—	—	—
Total	20	—	2

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

Year and affiliation	15 Years plus A	B	C
1980			
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1981			
PIRA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1982			
UVF	1	—	—
None	—	—	—
1983			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1984			
UVF	1	—	—
1985			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
1986			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1987			
UVF	—	—	—
UDA	—	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1988			
UDA	—	—	—
UVF	1	—	—
PIRA	—	—	—
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
1989			
UVF	4	—	—
UDA	5	—	—
PIRA	3	—	2
OIRA	—	—	—
None	—	—	—
Total	15	—	2

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

Indeterminate sentence prisoners released by affiliation and years served (1 January 1980—31 December 1989)

Year and affiliation	Total
1980	
PIRA	1
None	1
1981	
PIRA	2
UVF	1
None	1
1982	
UVF	1
None	6
1983	
UVF	1
UDA	2
None	1
1984	
UVF	2
1985	
UDA	4
UVF	3
PIRA	2
OIRA	2
1986	
UDA	4
UVF	2
OIRA	3
PIRA	4
None	2
1987	
UVF	9
UDA	3
PIRA	12
OIRA	2
None	2
1988	
UDA	6
UVF	12
PIRA	6
OIRA	3
None	2
1989	
UVF	16
UDA	9
PIRA	11
OIRA	1
None	2
Total	141

A—Murder
B—Other
C—SOSP

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost of keeping a prisoner in a prison and other places for the detention of criminals by category of establishment *(a)* per week and *(b)* annually in Northern Ireland; and what comparable information is available to him on prisons in (i) Scotland and (ii) England and Wales.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Prison establishments in Northern Ireland are not categorised in the same way as in Great Britain and direct comparisons are therefore not meaningful. This is mainly because of the additional security measures required in Northern Ireland in relation to custody of large numbers of paramilitary-type prisoners. The average cost of keeping a prisoner in Northern Ireland in 1988-89 was £1,046 per week and £54,406 annually.

Roads

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total expenditure each year on maintenance of *(a)* motorway and trunk roads and *(b)* other roads in each of the last five years; and what are his projections for the current and next calendar or financial year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available in the precise form requested. Expenditure details on road maintenance are as follows:

£ million

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	[1]*1989-90*
Motorways	1·8	1·7	1·8	1·5	3·3
Class I and class II roads	17·2	16·0	14·8	18·5	21·7
Other roads	27·8	30·3	32·6	31·7	32·6

[1] Estimated.

Present plans are better to meet by spending some £60 million in 1990-91.

Portavogie Harbour

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to enlarge Portavogie harbour to accommodate the present fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* The Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority has no plans to enlarge Portavogie harbour.

The authority has submitted proposals for extra shelter at Ardglass which could add to capacity there. There are doubts about whether fish stocks can sustain the expansion in the local fleets during the last two years.

Security Forces (Dwellings)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings have been searched by the security forces in each year since 1968.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* The available information on searches of premises under section 15 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 is as follows:

Year	*Army*		*RUC*
	Occupied	*Unoccupied*	
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a
1985	104	58	n/a
1986	137	41	1,818
1987	393	72	2,474
1988	751	278	4,136
1989			
1st quarter	217	89	1,144
2nd quarter	115	79	559

Most searches involve both the Army and RUC and are registered in their respective records. Both figures therefore are shown separately since there is an element of double counting.

Army Helicopter, County Tyrone

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the make, rate of fire calibre and range of the weapon or weapons used by the IRA against the Army helicopter destroyed in County Tyrone recently or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 23 February 1990]:* The incident is under investigation. No further information is available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has received to his proposals for helping disabled people who are not able to work full time.

Mr. Scott: We have sent copies of "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) to a wide range of disability organisations and other interested bodies inviting their comments on our proposals to improve the balance and structure of social security help for people with disabilities. We have now received comments from seven organisations and six individuals on our proposals to introduce a disability employment credit for people who are partially capable of work. The Social Security Advisory Committee has also written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State describing our proposals as a significant improvement to the system of benefits for disabled people. The committee particularly welcomed the introduction of a disability employment credit.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to improve disability benefits in order to give assistance with communication costs.

Mr. Scott: The Command Paper "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" published on 10 January contains several proposals that will give financial help to disabled people with communication costs. The introduction of an age-related addition for severe disablement allowance will assist many disabled people who have communication needs who have been disabled early in life or at birth. People with communication needs will be eligible for the new disability allowance in the same way as other disabled people. The introduction of a disability employment credit will also help people with communication needs who are partially capable of work. In addition, people who are both deaf and blind will, from April of this year, be able to receive mobility allowance at a rate of £26·25 per week.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the additional numbers of *(a)* disabled people aged 60 to 79 years and *(b)* people aged 80-plus years who became entitled to and were awarded (i) income support and (ii) housing benefit as a result of the increases to the premiums introduced in October 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 23 February at column *937*.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* single men, *(b)* married men, *(c)* single women and *(d)* married women who will qualify for each rate of the proposed addition to severe disablement allowance and the number in each category who will not qualify for any addition.

Mr. Scott: The available estimates are in the table:

	Men	*Married women*	*Single women*
Higher rate	80,000	15,000	65,000
Middle rate	10,000	25,000	15,000
Lower rate	10,000	25,000	10,000
No addition	2,500	—	—

Benefit Fraud

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many officials in his Department are involved in investigating benefit fraud.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Precise figures are not available, but it is possible to estimate the number of full-time equivalent posts on the basis of records of staff time expended on benefit fraud work. In 1988-89, the last year for which figures are available, the number of full-time equivalent posts was 2,940. Benefit savings achieved in 1988-89 were £262 million.

Charities

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the role played by charities in the provision of welfare benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Charities play no role in the provision of social security benefits. In the income-related benefits, however, we have recently announced improvements which will enable charities to increase the additional help they give to people without affecting their benefits.

Benefits (Overpayments)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances overpayments of social security benefits are recovered at common law; how many such actions were brought in the last year for which records are available; which benefits were concerned; and how much was recovered.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Certain overpayments are not subject to a determination by the adjudicating authorities under section 53 of the Social Security Act 1986, for example, where duplicate payments of benefit have been made. Where the circumstances indicate that the claimant should have been aware of duplicate payments and taken appropriate action, repayment is sought on the common law principle that money paid under a mistake of fact should not be retained.

No central records are kept on which an answer to the second part of the question could be based.

Regulations

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the draft regulations of the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 8 February at column *787*.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the amendment to regulation 72 of the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1990 will be referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Social Security Advisory Committee has agreed that the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment Regulations 1990 should not be referred to it.

Family Incomes

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish a table showing the level of gross earnings in April 1990 at which *(a)* a single householder, *(b)* a married couple, *(c)* a married couple with two children aged four and six years and *(d)* a single parent with one child aged three years will lose in housing benefit, assuming full take-up of family credit, average rent and rates and other assumptions, as in his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), *Official Report*, 1 December 1987, columns *565-66*;

(2) if he will publish figures, similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for a lone mother with two children aged four and six years under the benefit system as uprated in April 1990 and in each of the following circumstances: *(a)* not working, after one year on benefits, *(b)* earning £20 a week from part-time working and (c) working full time and earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110 and (vii) £120 per week;

(3) if he will publish tables similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table showing net weekly spending power for each of a single-wage married couple *(a)* with two children aged four and six years and *(b)* with three children aged three, eight and 11 years, earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110, (vii) £120, (viii) £130, (ix) £140, (x) £150, (xi) £160, and (xii) £170 under the benefit system as uprated in April.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested will not be available until after the Budget. I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible after the Budget.

Community Charge

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide as much information as is available to him regarding the take-up of poll tax benefit, with a local breakdown showing the number of successful applicants in each local area and the range of benefit levels awarded.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Estimates of levels of take-up of community charge benefit can be obtained only when data from the relevant family expenditure survey become available. Figures for the numbers of benefit recipients in each local authority area will be available in due course but it will not be possible to provide a breakdown of the range of benefit levels awarded.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to give a substantive reply to the question from the hon. Member for Northampton, North about community charge rebate for pensioners, tabled for priority written answer on 15 February.

Mrs Gillian Shephard: I have answered my hon. Friend's question today.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the increased cost of community charge rebate if the rebates available to pensioners were unaffected by their savings which would not be taken into account.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 February 1990]*: Information is not available to make precise estimates, but it seems probable that expenditure on community charge benefit would increase by between £175 million and £225 million if the capital limit were abolished for pensioners and no income was assumed to be derived from their capital holdings.

Cash Limits

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there have been any changes to the cash limit of his Department for 1989-90.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cash limit for class XV vote 7 will be reduced by £87,000 from £1,594,692,000 to £1,594,605,000.

This reduction represents the Department of Social Security's contribution towards the scheme for providing temporary shelters by certain health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations in the event of a spell of exceptionally severe weather to safeguard the health of people sleeping rough in central London, as announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health on 20 February.

There will be a corresponding increase on administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social Services, England vote, class XIV, vote 3.

HEALTH

Northern Ireland Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list of courses at universities and colleges in England for which his Department refuses to pay tuition fees for students from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Freeman: There are none. If a student successfully competes for a place tuition fees will be paid provided the student fulfils the EC residency requirements of the award scheme.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to establish whether any discrimination exists against Northern Ireland students academically eligible to enrol on courses at universities or colleges in England for which the Department of Health normally pays tuition fees.

Mr. Freeman: None. Northern Ireland students can compete for places on courses for which the Department of Health normally pays tuition fees.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Department of Health pays tuition fees on behalf of students from the Republic of Ireland and other European Community states accepted for courses at universities and colleges in England.

Mr. Freeman: Tuition fees are payable on behalf of students from Republic of Ireland and other European Community countries provided they fulfil the EC residency requirements of the award scheme.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why his Department stopped its grant to the tranquilliser withdrawal group TRANX; and what other similar groups his Department now supports.

Mr. Freeman: TRANX was grant-aided under the Department's central funding initiative for drug misuse for the maximum three-year period. Following this, TRANX obtained further funding from local statutory authorities. As TRANX continued to experience funding difficulties negotiations took place with the local statutory authorities but no agreement could be reached whereby funding could continue.

It is Government policy that support and planning for direct client services should be the responsibility of the local statutory authorities which are best placed to decide, which organisations best fit in with local service plans and budgets. In order to help regions develop such services for drug misuse, substantial amounts of earmarked funding have been allocated each year since 1986-87. This funding totalled nearly £15 million in 1989-90.

When the North West Thames regional health authority and the London borough grants unit decided not to continue to support TRANX the Department wrote in December 1989 explaining that because of this and given the constraints on central funds no further grant aid was available from the Department.

The Department is supporting MIND to produce a national directory of local tranquilliser services and public information material on tranquillisers.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of places currently provided by *(a)* private and *(b)* voluntary registered residential homes in each local authority area in England.

Mr. Freeman: The number of places provided by *(a)* private and *(b)* voluntary registered residential homes in each local authority, as at 31 March 1987 is published in "Residential Accommodation for Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People: Number of local authority, voluntary and private homes and places at 31 March 1987 England" and "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes Year Ending 31 March 1987 England". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Tuberculosis Vaccine

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the supplies of tuberculosis vaccine that are available to children.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) on 1 March at columns *304-5*.

Cervical Cytology

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to issue guidance to the Devon family practitioner committee to the effect that women who have had hysterectomies and those who, at their own request, do not wish to be placed on the cervical cytology recall system will not cause their general practitioner to be placed at financial disadvantage with regard to the calculation for new target payments under the new contract for general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The method of calculating target payments for cervical cytology is set down in paragraph 28 of the revised statement of fees and allowances. The population used in the calculations includes all women aged 25 to 64 save those who have had full hysterectomies. The Devon family practitioner committee is well aware of these arrangements.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the authority under which non-medical personnel may request information from general practitioners as to why patients on their lists are not on the cervical cytology recall system.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: HC(88)1, a copy of which is in the Library, states that all women aged 20 to 64 should be invited for cervical screening, unless their general practitioner has indicated that they should be excluded. The detailed operation of computerised call and recall systems for cervical screening is a matter for family practitioner committees on behalf of district health authorities.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are registered as requiring speech therapy in Liverpool; how many currently receive such help; how many speech therapists are employed by the health authority; how many vacancies remain unfilled; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Liverpool health authority has had difficulty recruiting qualified speech therapists and is currently examining, with the help of an expert adviser, how the situation can be improved. A report is due at the end of March. For detailed information, the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Liverpool health authority.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the provision of facilities for sufferers of schizophrenia on Merseyside; how many acute admission wards, day hostels and day hospitals exist for the care of schizophrenics on Merseyside; how many trained psychiatric staff are employed by the health authority; and how many schizophrenics are registered with the health authority.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Mersey regional health authority.

AIDS

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will review compensation payments for HIV patients who contracted the AIDS virus as a direct result of blood transfusions made during the course of surgery; what are the latest estimates of the number of patients involved; what would be the total cost if they were treated on a par with haemophiliac HIV victims; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The additional ex-gratia payment made to the Macfarlane Trust enabling lump sum payments of £20,000 to each haemophiliac with HIV was not compensation.

It recognised the wholly exceptional circumstances which haemophiliacs and their families face, that their insurance, employment and mortgage prospects were already affected by their serious disability, and the hereditary nature of haemophilia can mean that more than one member of a family may be affected. The situation of someone who has contracted HIV as the result of a blood transfusion is, therefore, not directly comparable.

The position at the end of January 1990, as reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre, is that in England, Wales and Northern Ireland there have been 18 cases of AIDS in people known to have been transfused in the United Kingdom, of whom 13 are known to be dead (not necessarily directly as a result of AIDS). The comparable figure on HIV seropositive transfused in the United Kingdom was 17.

Compensation is a matter for the courts.

Durham Health Authority

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for City of Durham for answer on 9 February concerning spending by Durham health authority.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 28 February at columns *226-27*.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total cost involved in the running of the Yorkshire regional health authority headquarters and administration for 1990-91 and for each of the past five years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 25 January 1990]*: Figures for headquarters administration expenditure in the Yorkshire region for the years 1983-84 to 1988-89 (the latest year available) are shown in the table:

Headquarters administration expenditure—Yorkshire region
£ thousand (cash)

	Regional health authority	*District health authorities*	*Total*
1983-84	4,926	22,444	27,370
1984-85	5,924	23,741	29,665
1985-86	7,113	23,199	30,312
1986-87	7,997	24,218	32,215
1987-88	8,675	28,113	36,788
1988-89	8,962	30,479	39,441

Source: Annual accounts of the Yorkshire regional health authority (RHA) and the district health authorities (DHAs) comprising the

Yorkshire region.

Notes:

1. Expenditure on headquarters administration includes all current expenditure on the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines (for recent years including general managers) employed at headquarters levels and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit level: such costs are regarded as operational.

2. Prior to 1 April 1985 some districts had an associated family practitioner committee (FPC). Those authorities' expenditure for the years before that date include small elements relating to FPCs administrative expenses which are not separately identifiable.

3. Regions are managed in an integrated way and total expenditure by the Yorkshire region is more meaningful than that for the Yorkshire RHA in isolation from the districts within the region.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

BBC External Services

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of developments in eastern Europe, he will review the level of provision of English language teaching of the BBC external services in those countries.

Mr. Sainsbury: We regularly review with the BBC World Service the hours of English language teaching (ELT) for eastern Europe and other regions. ELT in English to Europe and the Soviet Union increased by 50 per cent. to 26·5 hours a week between 1986 and 1989. In addition, 4·5 hours a week are broadcast in eastern European and Russian vernaculars.

Nicaragua

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the elections in Nicaragua.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) on 27 February.

NATO Arms Definitions

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are NATO's current definitions of (i) main battle tanks, and (ii) combat aircraft currently being discussed at the conventional forces in Europe talks in Vienna; and how these differ from NATO's previous definitions.

Mr. Waldegrave: Copies of the NATO texts tabled on 8 February for a new definition of tanks/armoured combat vehicles and for a revised proposal on combat aircraft are being placed in the Library of the House.

The new texts reflect western efforts to meet Warsaw pact concerns. On tanks the weight limit has been reduced to capture more vehicles (13 tonnes for tracked tanks; 20 tonnes for wheeled) and a limit of 1,500 has been introduced on heavy armoured combat vehicles (the category into which less heavy but comparably armed vehicles would fall). On combat aircraft a new ceiling of 4,700 has been set (to include medium bombers and land-based naval aircraft); aircraft whose primary function is training have been excluded and an additional 500 limit is set on air defence interceptors. The 30 per cent. sufficiency rule will still apply.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the total withdrawal of Soviet short-range nuclear forces from eastern Europe outside the terms of a multilateral disarmament agreement between NATO and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO has repeatedly called on the Soviet Union to reduce the number of its short-range nuclear missile systems, in which it enjoys a substantial numerical superiority vis-a-vis the West.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the total withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from eastern Europe *(a)* at the request of east European Governments and *(b)* as part of the conventional forces in Europe talks in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: The CFE agreement will set limits on participating states' armed forces in the area of application (from the Atlantic to the Urals). The western treaty text (tabled on 14 December) envisages that it will be for each alliance to determine how these residual forces will be apportioned among its members. Soviet armed forces are already being withdrawn from certain east European countries as a result of bilateral agreements. The future of Soviet forces in the GDR has yet to be agreed. But we could imagine the continued presence of Soviet troops for a transitional period.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to states that are capable of producing chemical weapons having signed a chemical weapons convention before the transitional period for the implementation of a chemical weapons convention can be deemed to have been concluded.

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall encourage all states to sign and ratify a chemical weapons convention at the earliest possible time after it has been agreed.

Conventional Force Talks

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the time scale for the resumption of further conventional force reduction talks in Europe upon completion of the current conventional forces in Europe talks in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: This was set out in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the Ottawa open skies conference on 12 February.

He said:

"I believe that we should launch immediately after the CSCE Summit later this year continuing consultations among all the countries concerned, with a view to new negotiations on an agreed basis as soon as possible. We should focus on both types of dividend—on the political, as well as the military, goals of arms control. Those negotiations should be closely supervised at the political level and involve participation by Ministers, where necessary."

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the Warsaw pact's armed forces in the Atlantic to the Urals region in the categories of (i) main battle tanks, (ii) other armoured vehicles, (iii) artillery, (iv) anti-tank weapons, (v) combat aircraft and (vi) personnel belong to member states other than the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: Updated data on armed forces (which corresponds to agreed definitions) will be exchanged formally on signature of a CFE agreement. Until this is done, it is not possible to say precisely what proportion Soviet forces form of total Warsaw pact forces, but as the figures provided in the NATO booklet "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts" show, it is substantial.

Under the sufficiency rule in the CFE negotiations, individual country holdings will be limited to a fixed proportion of total equipment holdings in the area. Under the West's envisaged 30 per cent. limit, the Soviet Union would be entitled to 60 per cent. of the Warsaw pact entitlements (under the eastern 35-40 per cent. limit, 70-80 per cent.). As this sufficiency rule would take effect after parity, it implies the Soviet Union holds more than that proportion now.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in light of non-proliferation goals set by the European Community, he will make it his policy to make representations to his French counterpart concerning the agreement made on 21 February by France with Pakistan to sell a nuclear plant.

Mr. Waldegrave: If the sale to which the hon. Member refers goes ahead, we are confident, in view of the stated French position, that it will be subject to adequate guarantees that no nuclear material can be diverted to non-peaceful uses. Such guarantees would include the application of safeguards by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any member state of the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty has notified Her Majesty's Government over its concern with Anglo-French technical collaboration on air-launched nuclear missile systems, in the context of United Kingdom commitments under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty article 1.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Article 1 of the non-proliferation treaty would be relevant to possible Anglo-French collaboration on an air-launched missile only if that collaboration were to involve the transfer of a nuclear warhead, which it would not.

Diplomatic Immunity

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have made any representations since May 1979 to any other Government following the violation of diplomatic immunity of an embassy or ambassadorial residence by forces not representing the Government of the state where the embassy was based.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

UN Disarmament Literature

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has any commitment to the United Nations for the responsibility of distribution in the United Kingdom and dependent territories of United Nations disarmament literature.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to assist in the provision of books, journals and academic literature to Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the destruction of Bucharest university central library during the Romanian revolution, the British Council has agreed to pay for the transport to Romania of more than 250,000 academic books collected from the public and publishers by Professors Deletant, Crampton, Clogg and Pavlovitch.

Diplomatic Personnel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requirements are placed on United Kingdom diplomatic personnel based at Her Majesty's embassies abroad with regard to keeping within the law of the state where they are based; and what guidance is given to diplomatic personnel concerning their actions under conditions when the Government of the country in which they are based are removed by a revolution.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with article 41 of the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations, staff of missions overseas are expected to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving state. Guidance on this point, but not on the specific circumstances of a Government being removed by revolution, was issued to all posts and to staff in London in October 1989.

HIV

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States Government concerning that Government's practice of requiring disclosure of the HIV status of visitors to the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: In January the United Kingdom made an official approach to the United States Department of State on the question of United States immigration policy in relation to people with HIV and AIDS. The United States authorities recognised the difficulties caused by the present rules, which they have undertaken to apply flexibly and sympathetically, but they pointed out that a change in policy would require new legislation by the United States Congress.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department offers to United Kingdom citizens on questioning about their HIV status by United States of America immigration authorities.

Mr. Sainsbury: No United Kingdom citizens have sought advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on how to respond to questions regarding HIV status from the United States immigration authorities.

EMPLOYMENT

Advice Interviews

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether a claimant attending employment service counselling interviews with either *(a)* a new client adviser, *(b)* a restart counsellor or *(c)* a claimant adviser who feels they are being treated unfairly or harshly can ask for the interviewer to be changed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: If a client wishes to see a different counsellor or adviser this can be arranged.

If no other suitable counsellor or adviser is available the client may see the office manager instead.

Review Interviews

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether an unemployed claimant at a review interview whom an employment service councillor thinks is refusing suitable employment either before or after the interview and completes a UB195 and UB195A, or his or her representative can ask for and receive copies of both documents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Form UB195 is a report of a claimant who fails to take the chance of a job or training offered by an employment service counsellor. It contains details of the job vacancy or training opportunity offered and the submission to, and decision of, the statutory adjudication officer. Copies of this form are not available to the claimant.

Form UB195A, which is issued to the claimant as a matter of course, includes an exact copy of the details of the vacancy/training opportunity from the UB195. The UB195A offers space for the claimant to comment on their refusal, to assist the independent adjudicaton officer in deciding whether there was "good cause" for their refusal. Claimants may keep a copy of the UB195A; or retain the original form and submit their comments on a separate sheet of paper. They may, as an alternative, ask the unemployment benefit office for a copy of the UB195A.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that the operation plans of each TEC are available in the Library; and if he will also place copies in the main libraries of the areas covered by the TECs.

Mr. Eggar: The contract between my Department and each TEC will require the publication of a summary of the TEC's corporate and business plans. I shall arrange for these summaries to be placed in the Library as they become available. The contract will also provide that a full copy of the corporate plan must be made available to the public at the registered office of the TEC. TECs will be free to choose whether to place copies of their plans in local libraries.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all workplace nurseries known to him, by county, together with the number of places in each.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not collected, but indications are that the provision of such facilities is growing.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on which occasions and for what reasons the Health and Safety Executive sought outside assistance from Her Majesty's inspectors of mines with reference to health and safety issues raised during construction of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Nicholls: Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines is an integral part of the Health and Safety Executive, not an outside agency, and is involved as appropriate on health and safety matters relating to the Channel tunnel.

Radiation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if, in the light of the Gardner report on radiation risks, he will review current radiation exposure limits at facilities in Scotland licensed to handle radioactive materials;

(2) if, in the light of the Gardner report on radiation risks, he will review current radiation exposure limits at facilities in England licensed to handle radioactive materials;

(3) if, in the light of the Gardner report on radiation risks, he will review current radiation exposure limits at facilities in Wales licensed to handle radioactive materials.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* The radiation exposure limits for all workers are set out in schedule 1 of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. These regulations are based on internationally accepted recommendations from the International Commission on Radiological Protection which are currently being reviewed in the light of revised estimates of risk from radiation.

On 5 February the Health and Safety Commission published a consultative document inviting comments on additional interim guidance on dose limitation pending receipt of revised international recommendations.

In view of the importance of the Gardner report it is to be referred to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) for immediate consideration. In addition, HSE, subject to the agreement of the individuals concerned, will be investigating in co-operation with BNFL whether other common factors were relevant in the Sellafield study cases. This may help to identify further measures to protect employees.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Industrial Waste

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the licences for dumping industrial waste including the substances, companies and

amounts involved which have been *(a)* submitted to him, *(b)* submitted to the Oslo commission and *(c)* approved by him since 1 December 1989 giving the dates in each case.

Mr. Gummer: The information is as follows:

Sterling Organics
Aqueous residue from preparation of paracetamol 42,000 tonnes.
Submitted to Oslo Commission: 19 September 1989.
Application for renewal received: 18 December 1989.
Licence approved: 23 February 1990.

Fisons
Wash waters from synthesis of Intal—a treatment for asthma and allergies 4,000 tonnes.
Submitted to Oslo Commission: 19 September 1989.
Application for renewal received: 18 December 1989.
Application rejected: 16 January 1990.

Orsynetics
Salt solution from manufacture of o-tolyl-biguanide 3,000 tonnes.
Submitted to Oslo Commission: 5 October 1989.
Application for renewal received: 14 December 1989.
Licence approved: 22 February 1990.

Fine Organics
Wash waters from synthesis of antibiotic and anti-ulcer medicines 8,000 tonnes.
Submitted to Oslo Commission: 21 December 1989.
Application awaited.

Tate and Lyle
Chalk solution from sugar refining 30,000 tonnes.
Submitted to Oslo Commission: 16 February 1990.
Application awaited.

I also refer the hon. Member to my written answer of 22 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), *Official Report*, column *899*, in which I stated that it is the Government's intention that none of these wastes will continue to be dumped at sea after the end of 1992.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 4 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *105-8*, if he will list the licence applications for dumping industrial waste which in 1990 he expects to *(a)* renew, and *(b)* refuse; if he will list those for which alternative methods of disposal will be found: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have renewed licences held by Orsynetics and Sterling Organics. I expect to renew licences held by Fine Organics, Tate and Lyle, National Power and ICI. I have refused a licence to Fisons. Other licences will not be renewed if alternative means of disposal of the wastes concerned are available at the time existing licences expire.

Alternative means of disposal will be implemented for all the wastes concerned. As I stated in my written answer of 22 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) *Official Report*, column *899*, it is the Government's intention that none of these wastes will continue to be dumped at sea after the end of 1992. For several of those licences to be renewed in 1990 an alternative means of disposal is expected to be in place within a year.

I also expect to renew licences held by British Coal for dumping stone from colleries.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 4 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns 105-8, if he will list the applications for dumping industrial waste which he approved in 1989, listing the substances, quantities and companies involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 4 December *(Official Report*, columns *105-8)*, which lists the applications received. All except the solid waste from boric acid production were approved.

I also refer the hon. Member to my written answer of 22 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) *(Official Report*, column *899)* in which I stated that it is the Government's intention that none of these wastes will continue to be dumped at sea after the end of 1992.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place the details in the Library of the applications for dumping industrial waste to include the chemical components, the amounts involved and the companies involved for *(a)* wash waters from the synthesis of antibiotic and anti-ulcer medicines and *(b)* chalk solution from sugar refining.

Mr. Gummer: I am arranging to place in the Library copies of the information sent to the Oslo Commission about these wastes.

I also refer the hon. Member to my written answer of 22 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), *Official Report*, column *899*, in which I stated that it is the Government's intention that none of these wastes will continue to be dumped at sea after the end of 1992.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the pesticides which have been reviewed since 16 March 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list those pesticides which are currently being reviewed which are undergoing *(a)* a full review and *(b)* a partial review; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list those pesticides which have been reviewed that have *(a)* been subject to a full review and *(b)* been subject to a partial review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The following pesticides approved by my Department have been reviewed by the advisory committee on pesticides:

Reviews concluded by the ACP before 16 March 1989

	Review
Amitrole (Aminotriazole)	Partial
Aldicarb	Partial
Binapacryl	Full
Biologicalagents	Partial
Bitertanol	Full
Cyhexatin	Partial
Dinoseb	Full
Dinoseb-Acetate	Full
Dinoterb	Full
DNOC	Full
Ethylene Dibromide	Full
Maleic Hydrazide	Full
Mercury Compounds	Full
Persistent Organochlorine Insecticides	Full
Synthetic Pyrethroids	Full
2, 4, 5-T	Full
Triazophos	Partial

Reviews concluded by the ACP since 16 March 1989

	Review
Captafol	Full
Daminozide	Partial
Dimethoate	Partial
Fenbutatin oxide	Partial
Fentin acetate	Partial
Fentin hydroxide	Partial
Iprodione	Partial

Reviews currently in progress

	Review
Alachlor	Full
2-aminobutane	Partial
Benomyl	Full
Bromoxynil	Full
Captan	Full
Carbendazim	Full
2, 4-D	Full
Dimeton-s-methyl	Full
Demeton-s-methyl-sulphone	Full
Diazinon	Full
Dichlgrvos	Full
Dinocap	Full
Ferbam	Full
Ioxynil	Full
Lindane	Full
Linuron	Full
Mancozeb	Full
Maneb	Full
Methyl bromide	Partial
Mevinphos	Full
Monolinuron	Full
Nabam	Full
Oxydemeton-methyl	Full
Propineb	Full
Sulfonyl ureas	Partial
Tecnazene	Full
Thiabendazole	Full
Thiram	Full
Thiophanate methyl	Full
Zineb	Full

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those pesticides for which a review is planned that will be subject to *(a)* a full review and *(b)* a partial review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The advisory committee on pesticides will consider the most appropriate form of review for each active ingredient, listed in the reply given on 11 December, *Official Report*, column *512*.

Sea Wall Defences

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of sea wall defences along the north Wales, Lincolnshire and Somerset coastlines following the extensive flooding from the storms on 25 to 27 February.

Mr. Gummer: The state of flood defences, including sea walls, is continually monitored by the responsible authorities, and close liaison is maintained by my river and coastal engineers with authorities, in particular the National Rivers Authority, which undertake most of the works. Increases in grant provision following the public expenditure surveys in 1988 and 1989 resulted from our review, in close consultation with the National Rivers Authority and other responsible authorities, of current and future coastal and flood defence needs.

On the Lincolnshire coastline, where some £9 million has been invested since 1984 in the improvement of the defences between Mablethorpe and Skegness and an accelerated programme of works of the order of £20 million is planned over the next three years, the defences have successfully resisted two recent surge tides.

On the Somerset coastline the defences, which were constructed following the serious floods of 1981 at a cost of some £16 million, have in general resisted the extreme conditions, although there has been some flooding as a result of the unusual combination of high tide, surge, and wind. Among those locations where flooding has been experienced, schemes at Shirehampton and Pill are already programmed.

Authorities responsible for defences are assessing the effects of the storms, and we have asked for an early indication of changes to programmes. Grant at rates up to 70 per cent. (rising to 75 per cent. in 1990-91) from my Department will be available for schemes which satisfy our technical, economic and environmental criteria.

Government responsibility for the north Wales coastline rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

National Fruit Collection

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest position in relation to the proposed move of the national fruit collection from Brogdale to Wye college.

Mr. Curry: The transfer of the national fruit collection from Brogdale to Wye college is proceeding on schedule. Wye college is due to take over management of the collection on 1 April, and the detailed arrangements for its transfer and maintenance are being finalised.

All the rootstocks for the first phase of fruit trees have been obtained and some have been planted. The remainder will be planted as soon as weather and soil conditions permit. Some cuttings of soft fruit have also been taken. The rootstocks will be budded in late July/August and the first fruit trees will be established at Wye in the winter of 1991-92.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Scotch whisky industry.

Mr. Curry: I have nothing to add to my reply of 8 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *726*.

Bottled Water

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what responsibilities the food safety directorate has in the analysis of bottled water purity.

Mr. Maclean: The responsibility for the routine analysis of bottled water rests with local authorities. The food safety directorate undertakes analysis of food and drink as part of the Government's food surveillance programme or if there is a more general safety concern. The rapid response to the recent problem experienced by Perrier is an example of the latter role.

Fish Farming

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy towards the development of fish farming.

Mr. Curry: Our policy is to encourage the development of an efficient fish farming industry within the framework of statutory controls relating to fish disease and environmental considerations.

Eggs

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many eggs were imported from the continent in 1989.

Mr. Curry: The latest figures supplied by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise show that 1,129,347 cases of eggs were imported in 1989, of which 1,109,706 cases came from countries on the European mainland.

Alar

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now order a full review of alar.

Mr. Gummer: The advisory committee on pesticides reviewed consumer safety aspects of daminozide and concluded that the margins of safety are extremely large. Further data would be required for assessment if food uses were to continue.

Mink Farm

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his replies to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *896-97*, whether there is a mink farm at Stansted in Essex; and if he will make a statement about his method of compiling statistics on the numbers and locations of mink farms.

Mr. Maclean: There is a licensed mink farm at Stansted, Essex. Applications for licences to operate mink farms in England are received at the Ministry's divisional offices, which record locations and numbers of licences issued. The other agricultural departments are responsible for compiling statistics relating to farms in their regions. My answer of 22 February, column *897* contained a typographical error; the table showing numbers of mink farms should have shown a total as at 20 February 1990 of 50, not 51.

Battery Hens

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area would be required for a caged hen to allow her to perform all natural functions without hindrance; what is the area designated within the battery system per hen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Recent research has indicated that the activity demanding most space for a single bird (wing flapping) requires a considerably greater area than the minimum space allowance of 450 sq cm laid down in the Economic Community battery hens directive. In the review of the directive which is due to commence this year we will press for the minimum space to be increased.

DEFENCE

Savings

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has given any recent consideration to possible defence savings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given at column 596 on 6 February 1990 to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed deployment of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend met his NATO counterparts at the NATO nuclear planning group meeting in Armansil, Portugal on 24-25 October 1989, where the planning group confirmed its long-standing commitment to keep NATO's nuclear forces responsive, survivable and effective across the required spectrum of ranges.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now answer questions seeking to establish the countries in eastern Europe on which British and NATO nuclear weapons are targeted.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no grounds for any departure from the long-established practice of successive Administrations of not commenting on targeting policy.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had with the United States defence authorities regarding the stockpiling of unassembled nuclear missiles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Military Sufficiency

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has on the policy of the Soviet General Staff towards the doctrine of military sufficiency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have taken careful note of the statements by Soviet leaders on the shift in their military doctrine towards a more defensive posture, and the impact this is having on the structure of their armed forces. The unilateral force reductions and withdrawals from eastern Europe have provided some practical evidence of this shift, as have recent Soviet exercise patterns, although enhancements in the capability of remaining Soviet forces continue. We will continue to keep this under close examination and look forward to a CFE agreement which will bring about further reductions in Soviet forces in Europe.

Information (Access)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his policy to compare the access to information available to hon. Members in respect of the various responsibilities of his Department with the

equivalent access available to elected representatives in the United States of America and consider widening the scope and detail of the former.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is our policy to make available as much information as possible while preserving the confidentiality essential to national security and the effective working of the Department.

Aircraft (Alnwick)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any near miss report was made in respect of two Tornado aircraft and a Harrier flying over Alnwick at 14.32 on Tuesday 9 January; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: No such airmiss report has been filed.

SA80 Rifle

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to make further adaptations to the SA80 rifle.

Mr. Alan Clark: Modifications have already been trialled and tested, and will be introduced this year into production and as a retrofit.

Free-fall Bomb

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the parameters of range requirement of any new tactical air-to-surface missile being considered by his Department as a possible successor to the WE177 free-fall bomb.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on the detailed specifications for weapons systems under consideration as possible future replacements for the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether formal consultation procedures exist within NATO for the use of chemical weapons by the United States of America in Europe in time of conflict.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 11 December 1989 at column *526*.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether recent assessments by United States intelligence agencies regarding the Soviet stockpile of chemical weapons will lead to any reassessment by his Department of the size of the Soviet stockpile of chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 14 November, *Official Report*, column *188*.

Forces Levels (Europe)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989," volume 1, pages 46 and 47, what will be the balance of total ground forces *(a)* in the central region and *(b)* in the region from the Atlantic to the Urals as a result of President Bush's recent proposal to limit the number of United States and Soviet troops to 195,000 on each side being implemented.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A limit of 195,000 for United States and Soviet ground, air and air defence personnel to be stationed in a central area, comprising Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary and Poland, was agreed in Ottawa earlier this month. I am not aware that either side has yet decided what effect this limit will have on ground forces.

D Notices

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to introduce any new D notices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: D notices are not issued by the Secretary of State for Defence but by the defence press and broadcasting committee. I understand that currently there are no proposals for the issue of any new D notices.

Nuclear Materials (Military Use)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the mutual defence agreement 1959 between the United Kingdom and United States of America on the mutual provision of nuclear materials for military uses is still in force; and what amendments have been made to the agreement since it entered into force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I can confirm that the "Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for Co-operation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes" of 1958 remains extant.

The original text may be found in Cmnd. 537 (1958) whilst the amendments—which have generally served to extend the duration of the agreement, provide for the continued supply of materials and take account of developments in the technology being exchanged—may be found in Cmnd. 859 (1959), Cmnd. 4119 (1969), Cmnd. 4384 (1970), Cmnd. 6017 (1975), Cmnd. 7976 (1980) and Cmnd. 9336 (1984).

ENVIRONMENT

Cheshire Councils (Expenditure)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1979 the expenditure of Cheshire county council, Macclesfield borough council and Vale Royal borough council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head;

(2) if he will publish details for each year since 1979 of the direct revenue grants made to Cheshire county council, Macclesfield borough council and Vale Royal borough council in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* constant price terms and *(c)* cash terms per head of population.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

Net current expenditure

	Cash terms (£ million)	Constant price terms—1989-90 prices[1] (£ million)	Cash terms per head[2] (£)
Cheshire County Council			
1981-82	283·141	439·038	305
1982-83	309·508	447·610	332
1983-84	324·020	447·698	347
1984-85	340·138	447·724	363
1985-86	358·189	447·450	380
1986-87	384·486	464·651	406
1987-88	422·813	485·220	444
1988-89	461·458	493·760	483
1989-90[3]	488·977	488·977	512
Macclesfield Borough Council			
1981-82	5·301	8·220	35
1982-83	5·896	8·527	40
1983-84	6·465	8·933	44
1984-85	6·056	7·972	40
1985-86	6·288	7·855	42
1986-87	6·923	8·366	46
1987-88	6·774	7·774	45
1988-89	7·448	7·969	49
1989-90[3]	8·320	8·320	55
Vale Royal Borough Council			
1981-82	4·175	6·474	37
1982-83	4·276	6·184	38
1983-84	4·491	6·205	40
1984-85	4·539	5·975	40
1985-86	4·896	6·116	43
1986-87	4·770	5·765	42
1987-88	5·021	5·762	44
1988-89	5·206	5·570	46
1989-90[3]	6·072	6·072	54

[1] Using GDP deflator to covert cash values to constant prices.
[2] Using Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population to calculate per capita values.
[3] Budget estimates.

Direct revenue grants[1]

	Cash terms £ million	Constant price terms 1989-90 prices[2] £ million	Cash terms per head[3] £
Cheshire County Council			
1981-82	163·027	252·790	175
1982-83	156·280	226·012	168
1983-84	158·541	229·282	170
1984-85	162·094	213·364	173
1985-86	148·348	185·316	157
1986-87	133·437	161·259	141
1987-88	140·049	160·720	147
1988-89	150·041	160·544	157
1989-90	129·752	129·752	136
Macclesfield Borough Council			
1981-82	3·010	4·667	20
1982-83	2·972	4·298	20
1983-84	3·568	5·160	24
1984-85	3·214	4·231	21
1985-86	2·655	3·317	18
1986-87	3·086	3·729	20
1987-88	3·109	3·568	20
1988-89	2·867	3·068	19
1989-90	2·978	2·978	20
Vale Royal Borough Council			
1981-82	2·151	3·335	19
1982-83	2·118	3·063	18
1983-84	2·328	3·367	21
1984-85	2·424	3·191	22
1985-86	2·143	2·677	19
1986-87	2·099	2·537	18
1987-88	2·220	2·548	20
1988-89	2·094	2·241	18
1989-90	2·018	2·018	18

[1] Comprising block grant and specific and supplementary grants.
[2] Using GDP deflator to convert cash values to constant prices.
[3] Using Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population to calculate per capita values.

Bradshaw Brook (Sewage Discharges)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many instances of excessive sewage discharge into Bradshaw brook, in the North West water authority area, have been recorded during periods of wet weather, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No records are held of the frequency of operation of storm sewer overflows which primarily act as emergency outlets during periods of heavy rainfall. We have recently brought many of these overflows under the pollution control system for the first time, thereby ensuring that planned programmes of improvements will be carried out where necessary. I understand that North West Water Limited is undertaking a major resewerage scheme which should alleviate problems associated with unsatisfactory overflows into the lower Bradshaw brook at Bolton.

Local Authority Spending

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate local authority spending for 1990-91 per head of population in *(a)* Westminster, *(b)* Brent, *(c)* Wandsworth, *(d)* Humberside and *(e)* South Yorkshire.

Mr. Chope: I have as yet no firm information on local authority spending in 1990-91.

Shropshire County Council

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total spending by Shropshire county council during each of the past five years; and what has been the corresponding amount of Government grants.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Shropshire County Council

	Net current expenditure (£ million)	Direct revenue Grants[1] (£ million)
1985-86	141·981	81·087
1986-87	157·148	88·607
1987-88	173·019	93·063
1988-89	190·483	98·747
1989-90[2]	201·141	95·655

[1] Comprising block grant and specific and Supplementary grants.
[2] Budget estimates.

Community Charge

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a person with dual sensory impairment, such as deaf-blindness, but mentally alert, can

gain exemption from the poll tax; what are the procedures for claiming exemptions; whether homes for such people qualify residents for the collective community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Disability will qualify an individual for exemption from the community charge if it involves severe mental impairment as defined in the legislation. People with other disabilities may qualify for rebates and transitional relief, the detailed rules of which contain special thresholds and allowances for disabled people. People resident as patients in NHS hospitals or in residential care homes, nursing homes, mental nursing homes or certain hostels (again, as defined in the legislation) are exempt from the community charge. Exemption is claimed by giving the registration officer details of the ground on which it is sought. The collective community charge applies only to the residents of buildings where turnover is so frequent that it appears to a registration officer that individual registration and collection of the charge would be impracticable.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the rebates and reductions obtainable under the community charge system that are in real terms *(a)* more generous and *(b)* less generous than the rebates and reductions currently obtainable under the domestic rate system.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* Rebates of, and reductions in, the community charge are available through community charge benefit and transitional relief. There is no rates equivalent of transitional relief, which is therefore a generous addition to the existing provisions. Community charge benefit is based on the same income and capital criteria as housing benefit, under which rate rebates are paid; but the rate at which benefit is withdrawn as income rises is lower, which means that community charge benefit is available at higher levels of income, and is higher for any given level of income. There is no equivalent under the community charge of rate rebates under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978; but those rebates were intended to prevent disabled people having to pay higher rates as a result of necessary alterations which increased the rateable value of their home. They are not necessary under a system which is not based on property values.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received about conflict between local authorities' duties under the Coast Protection Act 1949 and the Nature Conservancy Council's responsibilities for sites of special scientific interest in respect of coastline protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: While I am aware of a number of cases where the interests of nature conservation have seemed at variance with the need for coastal protection under the Coast Protection Act 1949, I am pleased to be able to report that these are generally resolved by agreement between the parties involved.

Tenants' Choice

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to promote tenants' choice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Tenants' choice came into force in April last year and gives public sector tenants the opportunity to seek a new landlord for their homes. Many tenants are currently looking at the possibilities with the Housing Corporation. The spur of competition has also encouraged many local authorities to seek to improve the service they provide to their tenants.

We propose, with the Housing Corporation, to provide local publicity to raise awareness of the possibilities under tenants' choice in areas where it is relatively low. Advertisements will be placed in local newspapers and with local radio stations operating from the following centres: Manchester, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax, Leeds, Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, Bristol, Plymouth and Southampton. These areas were selected on the advice of the Housing Corporation. The publicity will run for three weeks from mid-March and will cost approximately £130,000. We are considering further publicity later this year in other areas where awareness of tenants' choice is currently low.

The Department, with the Housing Corporation, commissioned four videos which explain tenants' choice in detail. They should be completed by the end of March at a cost of approximately £120,000. They will be available to tenants through the Housing Corporation which has power to provide information, advice and assistance to tenants who are interested in tenants' choice.

Contracts for the publicity and the videos were awarded according to the conditions laid down by the Government information service.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce tenants' choice to Nottingham council estates; if he has made any estimate of the cost of such proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway).

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom to be targeted in his Department's campaign on the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988;

(2) what budget has been set for his Department's campaign on the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988; and whether any contracts have been awarded to outside bodies for preparation of such a campaign;

(3) whether he has any plans to jointly launch a campaign with the Housing Corporation to promote the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway).

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inquiries have been received from tenants or groups of tenants concerning tenants' choice.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: At 30 January 1990 the Housing Corporation had had 766 inquiries from tenant groups or individual tenants.

Local Government Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the 1990-91 revenue support grant entitlements of all local authorities in Kent in the same format as in the reply given to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling by the Secretary of State for Wales on 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *862-3*.

Mr. David Hunt: The entitlements for revenue support grant (ie after allowing for safety net adjustments) for the local authorities in Kent are listed in the following table:

Name	*Revenue support grant entitlement* £
Ashford	11,426,620
Canterbury	16,979,259
Dartford	12,254,297
Dover	14,848,572
Gillingham	13,255,746
Gravesham	12,357,886
Maidstone	16,868,067
Rochester Upon Medway	20,461,365
Sevenoaks	11,966,395
Shepway	11,640,754
Swale	16,228,029
Thanet	18,493,602
Tonbridge and Malling	13,492,043
Tunbridge Wells	12,060,160
Total for all districts	202,332,795

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in his reply on 22 February gave figures for the revenue support grant entitlements for Welsh county councils. It is not possible to calculate such figures for English county councils as although revenue support grant is paid to district councils in support of services provided by both the district and county council, there is no amount separately identified as being attributable to the county council.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his written reply dated 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region and so on, (1) whether he will provide in each case the amount of the average rate bill per adult as a percentage of the median full-time adult male earnings; (2) whether he will provide in each case the amount of the long-run community charge per head as a percentage of the median full-time adult male earnings.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1990]*: I have no information on median full-time adult male earnings in 1990-91.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the relevant notional amount for each charging and precepting authority which is the amount which would have been calculated by each charging and precepting authority in relation to the financial year 1989-90 on the assumption that 1989-90 was a chargeable year; and if he will show what other assumptions he has made in arriving at the relevant notional amount, using his powers under part VIII of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988 for community charge capping.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: I have made it clear that I shall not hesitate to cap authorities which insist on budgeting excessively for 1990-91, but it would not be right for me to speculate on any aspects of the operation of any capping scheme which might be needed.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of non-domestic properties in each English region and in Wales will be treated as small properties for the purposes of the business rate transitional arrangements.

Mr. Chope: The percentage of non-domestic properties in each English region and in Wales with a rateable value in the draft local rating lists which are to take effect on 1 April 1990 of £500 or more which have a value below the thresholds of £15,000 in Greater London and £10,000 elsewhere is as follows:

	Percentage
Northern	80
Yorkshire and Humberside	79
East Midlands	77
East Anglia	73
Inner London	62
Outer London	74
Rest of the South East	65
South West	76
West Midlands	76
North West	79
Welsh Valleys	83
Wales, except Valleys	82
All properties	74

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the fullest breakdown available to him of the 1990-91 standard spending assessment figures for Tonbridge and Malling of £5·364 million and £0·466 million in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *22*.

Mr. David Hunt: The sub-components of the service elements of the standard spending assessment for Tonbridge and Malling are:

	£ million
Other services—district level	5·328367
Other services—county level	0·060166
Flood defence	0·133639
Interest receipts	−0·158585
Total other services	5·363586
Debt charges	0·696891
Capital expenditure charge to revenue account	0·043102
Interest on capital receipts	−0·273607
Total capital financing	0·466386

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 1990-91 standard spending assessments per head of population, before safety net adjustments, for each borough and district council in Kent in descending order of magnitude.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no safety net adjustment to standard spending assessments. The standard spending assessment per adult for each charging authority in Kent is shown in the table:

1990-91 Standard Spending Assessments per Adult

	SSA per adult £/adult
Thanet	106
Rochester upon Medway	105
Gillingham	99
Dover	95
Shepway	94
Canterbury	92
Gravesham	92
Ashford	90
Swale	90
Maidstone	88
Tunbridge Wells	88
Dartford	84
Tonbridge and Malling	76
Sevenoaks	73

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the approximate public expenditure cost in 1990-91 of limiting the amount that ratepayers and ratepayer couples in England need pay in community charge to £3 a week over their 1989-90 rates bill, through the transitional relief scheme to individuals that he announced in October 1989, if local authorities in England spend *(a)* not more than 10 per cent. above their standard spending assessment and *(b)* not more than 15 per cent. above their standard spending assessment.

Mr. David Hunt: The transitional relief scheme gives relief based on the lower of the assumed charge or the actual charge. If the scheme operated in the way described, relief in many authorities would therefore be based on actual charges rather than assumed charges. I have no firm information on planned spending in most authorities and I am therefore unable to estimate the cost of the schemes described.

International Garden Festival Site (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of the international garden festival site, Liverpool.

Mr. Moynihan: The Merseyside development corporation is currently negotiating terms for the disposal of the site to a private company for development of leisure facilities.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), *Official Report*, 23 February, column *929 (a)* how many copies of the consultation paper on the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 issued on 25 January, to which he makes reference, have been published, *(b)* to which organisations and individuals the consultations have been distributed and *(c)* when he expects to collate and analyse comments received on the paper.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is as follows:

(a) 1,800 copies of the consultation paper have been printed;

(b) the organisations to which the paper was initially distributed are listed in the annex to the Department's consultation letter of 25 January, copies of which have been placed in the Library. Since then copies of the consultation paper have been sent on request to 330 organisations and individuals; and

(c) comments on the proposals in the consultation paper have been invited by 30 April 1990 and I will consider those received as soon as possible after that date.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), *Official Report*, 23 February, column *930*, if he will make it his policy to ask Her Majesty's chief inspector of pollution to compile a list of all firms known to *(a)* have imported toxic wastes since 1979 and *(b)* be currently importing toxic wastes.

Mr. Trippier: There is no central record of firms known to have imported toxic waste since 1979. From November 1988, information arising from the consignment notes required under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988, which includes the identity of importers of waste for disposal in Great Britain, has been collected by HMIP and the waste disposal authorities concerned.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any further information from the United States authorities or from any other source concerning the problem of toxic waste in Wath upon Dearne.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*. I will write to the hon. Member.

Sewage

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the amounts of sewage that were returned to land during the recent coastal storms; and what steps have been taken to decontaminate areas polluted by such sewage.

Mr. Trippier: It is unlikely that more than minimal amounts of sewage were returned to land during the recent storms, and consequently there should have been no pollution of land requiring treatment. Any decontamination which might have been needed would be a matter for local authorities.

Water Charges

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he took into account, other than those from the West Kent water company, before he announced his proposals for that company's K factor on 7 February.

Mr. Trippier: Under section 14(5) of the Water Act 1989 the requirement for the Secretary of State to consider representations before determining a company's initial K factor relates only to representations by the company.

Change of Landlord Applications

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been received by public sector landlords under section 96 of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 27 February 1990, to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), *Official Report*, column *174*.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many preliminary procedures under part IV of the Housing Act 1988 have commenced.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* At present, 20 tenant groups have been introduced to potential tenants' choice landlords by the Housing Corporation.

Fifty-eight other tenant groups are involved in preliminary discussions with the Housing Corporation.

Flood Protection

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the 1990-91 standard spending assessment for flood protection for the London borough of Westminster calculated on the same basis as the 1990-91 levy from the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* The flood defence element of the standard spending assessment for Westminster is £7·271 million. I have no information for Westminster on the 1990-91 levy from the National Rivers Authority.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to floodlight the river frontage of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* The river frontage of the Palace of Westminster is floodlit during the summer recess only, mainly because at other times the bright lights would disturb those working in the rooms on that side of the building.

I have no plans to change the current practice.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 5 March 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Women Teachers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many applications from women teachers who elect to cover pre 6 April 1988 service for family benefits purposes are outstanding;

(2) how many applications have been made by women teachers since the Government announced that women teachers could elect to cover, for family benefits purposes, their services prior to 6 April 1988;

(3) what is the average length of time taken to process applications made by women teachers who elect to cover pre 6 April 1988 service for family benefits purposes.

Mr. Alan Howarth: About 13,000 women teachers have elected for their service before 6 April 1988 to count for family benefit purposes. Only 500 elections remain to be processed and these are mainly cases where either the teacher or employer has incorrectly completed the election form or has provided insufficient information. Information on the average length of time taken to process the cases is not available.

University of Wales

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what, over the last five years for which figures are available, have been the proportions of University Grants Committee/Universities Funding Council grants to universities in the United Kingdom allocated to the university of Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Recurrent grants to the university of Wales as announced in the University Grants Committee's allocation letters were as follows.

Academic Year	*Wales £ million*	*All Great Britain £ million*	*Wales as per cent. of total*
1985-86	70·55	1,184·7	6·0
1986-87	71·84	1,220·9	5·9
1987-88	74·56	1,282·4	5·8
1988-89	75·39	1,332·0	5·7
1989-90	78·13	1,392·4	5·6

Single Sex and Religious Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls there are in single sex and religious schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of boys and girls in maintained single sex and religious schools in England is as follows:

Number of boys and girls in single sex and religious schools—January 1989
Maintained primary, middle and secondary

	Boys schools		*Girls schools*		*Mixed schools*	
	Boys	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Church of England	5,456	9	16	7,340	406,484	392,757
Roman Catholic	25,250	207	14	31,822	304,142	302,121
Methodist schools	0	0	0	0	2,453	2,273
Jewish schools	0	0	0	0	4,198	4,110
Other denominational schools	30,114	137	6	12,020	47,363	45,371
Non-denominational schools	98,854	126	78	136,818	2,562,061	2,428,600
TOTAL ENGLAND	159,674	479	114	188,000	3,326,701	3,175,232

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many and what percentage of women sit on boards awarding research grants.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend sponsors the five research councils—the agricultural and food research council; the economic and special research council; the medical research council; the natural environment research council and the science and engineering research council, all of which award grants for scientific research. At present, total membership of the councils is 102 and the number of women is 7, or 6·9 per cent.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* women lecturers and *(b)* men lecturers there are in (i) polytechnics and (ii) universities; and whether he will provide a break down of these by grade.

Mr. Jackson: Information for academic staff in universities is shown in the table.

Great Britain Full-time university academic staff 1988-89

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Professors	4,252	137	4,389
Readers/Senior lecturers	8,357	765	9,122
Lecturers	21,792	5,768	27,560
Other grades	3,089	2,122	5,211
Total	37,490	8,792	46,282

Source: USR staff record.
Information on the gender of polytechnic lecturers is not available centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mrs. Rumbold: Sessions on equal opportunities are included in all the Department's management training

courses. There are two managers at grade six or above outside headquarters: both have received some equal opportunities training.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many research grants were given to *(a)* women and *(b)* men in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available. Most Department of Education and Science research grants are placed with research institutes rather than individuals. The research councils are responsible for the allocation of research grants within their areas.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what child-care provision his Department provides for pre-school children of the employees; what child-care provision for school holidays and after school care is provided for employees' children aged five years and over; what plans he has to improve provision in the next five years; and how these will be funded.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has not yet provided child-care facilities for either the pre-school or school aged children of its employees; it has however contributed to the Westminster holiday play scheme. Currently consideration is being given to the provision of creche facilities and a holiday play scheme at the Darlington office. In London the Department is participating in an interdepartmental study of the scope for providing creches centrally and in commuting areas. Provided that the schemes can be justified as good value for money the Department could contribute to both the capital and running costs.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mrs. Rumbold: Senior executive officer.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the number of women in senior academic positions.

Mr. Jackson: The recruitment and promotion of staff is a matter for individual institutions.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mrs. Rumbold: The percentage of women in each grade requested is as follows:

Grade	*Per cent.*
7	25
6	23
5	21
4	25
1-3	0

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has plans to ensure that local education authorities' development programmes for further education provision will provide child-care facilities which allow *(a)* parents and *(b)* mothers to attend colleges, further education institutes, polytechnics and universities.

Mr. Jackson: No. Under the arrangements for local management of colleges provision of child-care facilities will normally be a matter for the governing bodies of institutions to determine.

Disabled People (Training Courses)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many training courses are funded by his Department for the disabled.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department does not directly fund courses of training or education: this is for the local education authorities. The training needs of the Department's disabled staff are provided for as they arise.

Sexual Harassment

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mrs. Rumbold: This Department's policy is that sexual harassment is a form of misconduct which is unacceptable and where substantiated, will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter. Guidance about sexual harassment, reporting complaints and disciplinary procedures was issued to each member of staff last year. Over the last five years three cases have been reported each of which was investigated. In one case a formal warning was issued.

Pin-ups

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's policy is to encourage staff to respect the feelings of others. It has issued guidance to all staff about sexual harassment which could include offensive pin-ups. It is not considered necessary to issue specific instructions about offensive pin-ups.

Exam Results

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will provide a breakdown of GCSE and A-level results by gender and subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: The figures in the table relate to school leavers of all ages in England in 1987-88, including their achievements at O-level and CSE gained in earlier years.

School leavers: examination attainments by selected subject

England

	Leavers with graded results in the GCSE (1): as percentage all leavers			*Leavers with A-level passes: as percentage all 17 year olds*
	Grades A-C[2]	*Grades D-G*[3]	*All grades*[4]	*Grades A-E*
Boys				
Any subject	53·3	35·0	88·4	17·4
English	35·1	46·3	81·4	2·9
Mathematics	35·8	40·9	76·7	7·6
Physics	21·8	24·4	46·2	5·6
Chemistry	16·5	13·9	30·4	4·4
Biological sciences	12·8	12·8	25·7	2·5
Craft, design, technology and other science	19·1	33·5	52·6	1·3
French	12·0	14·8	26·8	1·0
History	14·0	16·9	30·9	2·9
Geography	18·6	25·3	43·8	3·5
Creative arts	10·6	18·0	28·6	1·6
Commercial and domestic studies	5·1	12·1	17·2	0·6
Girls				
Any subject	61·4	30·1	91·5	16·9
English	48·3	39·4	87·7	6·7
Mathematics	30·5	46·4	76·8	3·9
Physics	9·8	9·7	19·5	1·7
Chemistry	12·0	12·7	24·7	2·8
Biological sciences	19·7	28·3	48·0	3·6
Craft, design, technology and other science	5·9	16·5	22·4	0·3
French	20·4	21·9	42·3	2·7
History	16·0	17·5	33·4	3·3
Geography	15·3	18·0	33·3	2·4
Creative arts	17·9	18·2	36·1	2·7
Commercial and domestic studies	22·2	31·6	53·9	1·3

[1] Including attainments at O-level and CSE.
[2] GCSE and O-level grades A-C; CSE grade 1.
[3] GCSE grades D-G, O-level grades D-E; CSE grades 2-5.
[4] Percentages have been calculated independently and may not equal the sum of the constituent parts owing to rounding.

Child Minders

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many training courses for child minders are funded by his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Nursery Education

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total public expenditure on nursery schools and classes in each year from 1975-76; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for England and Wales for each of these years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures for expenditure on nursery schools and classes alone are not available. Figures for current expenditure on all pupils aged under 5 in England are given in the table.

Year	*Current Spending Under-5s £ million*	*Money GDP £ billion*	*Spending as per cent. of GDP*
1975-76	108	111	0·10
1976-77	127	130	0·10
1977-78	128	151	0·08
1978-79	146	173	0·08
1979-80	177	208	0·09
1980-81	222	237	0·09
1981-82	241	260	0·09
1982-83	274	285	0·10
1983-84	296	309	0·10
1984-85	331	331	0·10
1985-86	350	362	0·10
1986-87	397	388	0·10
1987-88	447	430	0·10
1988-89	510	476	0·11
1989-90	561	517	0·11

Notes to table:

1. Under-5s include those in nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools, and other classes in primary schools.

2. The current spending figures are taken from successive DES Chapters of the Public Expenditure White Paper. The figure for 1975-76 is an estimate derived by applying to the White Paper figure given at 1980 survey prices a conversion factor calculated from local authority returns of price changes. The figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are provisional.

3. The money Gross Domestic Product figures are taken from Table 21·2·1 of Chapter 21 of the 1990 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm 1021). The GDP covers the whole of the United Kingdom; a GDP for England and Wales is not available.

Teacher Training

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish *(a)* the target intake figures for each polytechnic or college education department of faculty for 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990, and *(b)* the actual intake in each case for 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Initial teacher training target and intake figures for public sector institutions are as follows:

Institution	Target 1987	1988	1989	1990	Intake 1987	1988	1989
Polytechnics							
Birmingham	237	237	247	298	268	287	313
Brighton	337	352	377	370	341	339	408
Bristol	302	337	378	423	365	359	406
Hatfield	185	162	212	243	96	178	218
Huddersfield[1]	30	30	35	40	20	J	J
Kingston	190	188	207	218	181	176	203
Leeds	334	356	342	346	320	343	333
Leicester	50	50	50	52	51	46	54
Liverpool	269	284	279	251	274	233	264
Manchester	526	526	536	598	519	577	577
Middlesex	248	248	228	304	231	188	225
Newcastle	216	243	220	273	217	228	225
Oxford	156	166	186	217	167	206	186
North London	120	175	157	186	101	198	179
Sheffield	404	431	443	506	407	450	423
South Bank	188	168	158	159	132	133	105
Sunderland	218	250	248	268	193	212	272
Thames	402	442	482	504	435	373	420
Trent	321	341	346	367	269	258	371
Wolverhampton	361	366	391	432	344	358	438
Colleges and institutes							
Bath	247	262	237	258	242	260	278
Bradford	222	223	242	236	207	243	254
Bradford and Ilkley	172	158	172	188	127	172	168
Bretton Hall	205	215	225	250	222	276	158
Bulmershe[2]	217	236	—	—	215	195	—
Charlotte Mason	175	185	185	201	183	201	199
Crewe and Alsager	337	347	367	394	344	354	354
Derbyshire	167	173	187	203	166	147	211
Edge Hill	281	291	301	319	287	303	334
Essex	142	147	147	189	143	151	162
Nene	161	166	179	195	164	188	215
North Riding	135	180	200	216	161	149	243
Rolle[3]	170	205	220	236	206	207	235
West London	212	217	227	231	213	210	214
Worcester	252	280	281	287	221	245	268
Bishop Grosseteste	150	175	200	220	135	210	232
Chester	142	153	163	182	171	173	237
Christ Church	256	297	300	338	292	321	328
Homerton	266	300	292	325	285	283	319
King Alfred's	226	242	252	286	237	277	308
La Sainte Union	201	219	229	233	182	234	287
Liverpool	334	351	356	393	349	394	407
Newham and Westhill	240	236	228	247	260	238	272
Ripon and York	262	257	272	295	231	261	273
Roehampton	526	501	533	544	434	460	582
St. Mark and St. John	167	209	235	256	173	251	237
St. Martin's	297	316	307	344	327	312	315
St. Mary's	208	227	229	259	220	200	250
St. Paul and St. Mary's	217	227	242	259	228	237	261
Trinity and All Saints	254	260	284	306	229	267	263
West Sussex	242	267	276	292	256	258	281
Westminster	195	210	230	264	194	231	261
Welsh institutions							
Bangor (Normal)	135	135	135	144	119	135	177
Gwent	135	135	135	175	154	128	154
North East Wales	95	95	95	94	115	104	111
South Glamorgan	250	250	250	262	272	268	272
West Glamorgan	95	95	95	105	82	107	136
Trinity	155	155	155	171	134	174	175

[1] Data on intakes to courses with January start dates are not collected centrally (indicated within tables by notation 'J').
[2] Bulmershe College target and intake figures are included with Reading University figures from 1989.
[3] Rolle College is now the Polytechnic of the South West.

Replan

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his decision about the future of Replan.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend will announce his decision on the future of the Replan programme when he has considered the issues fully.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish the evaluation undertaken by his Department of the Replan project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Replan programme was introduced in 1984 with the aim of creating better opportunities for unemployed adults. It was initially funded to run up to 1987, but was subsequently extended on four occasions and will continue in its present form up to October 1991. The Government are currently undertaking a policy review of the programme, and have commissioned the preparation of an evaluation study as part of that review. The final report of the study is expected shortly. My right hon. Friend will consider whether the findings of the evaluation study should be more widely available when the policy review is completed.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *3*, whether he will carry out a survey of the current availability of land for use as school playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so. The provision of school playing fields is a matter for LEAs and others responsible for the schools.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will seek a report from the London borough of Enfield about the position of school playing fields for the proposed Southgate school consolidation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department has received a submission from Enfield LEA seeking formal approval to a building project associated with the proposed consolidation of Southgate school. The submission includes a certificate confirming that the proposals will comply with the statutory standards. These include playing field requirements. The proposal will be considered by the Department in accordance with normal procedures.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will ask the medical research council to undertake research concerning the relationship between the development of chronic bronchitis or emphysema and exposure to substances associated with the processing, smelting, working or production of steel.

Mr. Jackson: No; it is for the council to determine its own priorities for funding from its grant in aid.

Human Infertility

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the research the Government are currently funding into the causes of human infertility; and what is the cost to the Government of this research.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 30 October 1989, *Official Report*, columns *11-13*. The cost of research into the causes of human infertility has not been separated out from the overall cost of research into human infertility.

PRIME MINISTER

Security Services

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the terms of reference of the Sir Anthony Duff inquiry of 1987 into the security services.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my statement in the House of 6 May 1987.

Sea Dumping

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to transfer responsibility for regulating sea dumping from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Department of the Environment.

The Prime Minister: No.

Deforestation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 28 February, what she is doing to implement Dr. Holdgate's suggestion that the priority for western Governments is to steer deforestation practices in the direction of sustainable cropping systems.

The Prime Minister: Helping developing countries with sustainable forest management is the key objective of the British aid programme's increasing support for tropical forestry activities.

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her oral reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on Tuesday 27 February, what sums have been expended by Her Majesty's Government in preparation or advocacy of self-governing status of hospitals within the National Health Service.

The Prime Minister: Over £80 million has been made available this year for preparation for the implementation of the National Health Service review proposals as a whole. Resources have not been specifically allocated from within this sum for the preparation of National Health Service trusts.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, *Official Report*, 26 February, column *8*, she will set out the policy considerations involved in her decision not to place in the Library the letter to Mr. Colin Wallace to which the hon. Member made reference.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to do so.

Press Briefings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give details of the contents of the press briefings by her press secretary in relation to the Leader of the Opposition in the week beginning 12 February.

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to give details of press briefings.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Notice Questions

Mr. Beith: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many private notice questions were answered *(a)* from Back Bench Members and *(b)* from Opposition Front Bench Members in the sessions of 1977-78, 1978-79 and 1988-89.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: For sessions 1977-78 and 1978-79 it is not possible accurately to identify whether private notice questions were asked by Back Bench Members or Opposition Front-Bench Members. However, of the 20 questions asked in Session 1977-78 my best assessment is that six were asked by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen and for Session 1978-79 the numbers were 29 and 13 respectively. In Session 1988-89, a total of 35 private notice questions were asked; of these, 21 were asked by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Baltic Gold

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Baltic gold; and what is its current value.

Mr. Waldegrave: When the Baltic states were incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940, the property of a number of British nationals was seized without compensation. The Soviet authorities also did not accept responsibility for the external debts of the Baltic states, including three external loans which had been placed in London. To safeguard British interests, the British Government responded by freezing the gold reserves of the three Baltic central banks which were deposited in London, and which were claimed by the Soviet authorities.

Negotiations between the British and Soviet Governments culminated in an agreement which was signed on 5 January 1968. This provided that the British and Soviet Governments would not pursue their respective claims. It thus enabled the British Government to use most of the money realised from the sale in 1967 of the Baltic gold reserves (in addition to certain other assets of the Baltic States and ceded territories) to meet in part the claims of British creditors who had lost assets in the former Baltic states and in certain other territories incorporated into the Soviet Union. The judicial determination of these claims was carried out by the Foreign Compensation Commission in accordance with the Foreign Compensation (Union of Soviet Socialists Republics) Order 1969; claimants eventually receiving 42·6 per cent. of the assessed value of their claims.

The Baltic gold (weighing 460,220 fine ounces) realised £5·8 million when sold in 1967. Its value would be approximately £112·17 million at current prices.

East European Foreign Ministers

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovakian counterparts; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met his Polish and Czechoslovak counterparts at the open skies conference in Ottawa on 12 to 14 February. They discussed various issues of bilateral relations, internal developments in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and German reunification. My right hon. Friend met the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Dr. Horn, on 28 February. They discussed a number of bilateral issues including the know-how fund for Hungary, and other questions relating to the future of Europe.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong detention camps have injured themselves in protest at the British Government's screening policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Since 16 June, 12 people have injured themselves in Hong Kong detention centres.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is given generally to Vietnamese boat women in Hong Kong detention camps as to the health attributes of the contraceptive drug Depo Provera and its consequences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on this question on 14 February at column *235*.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to improve trade and consular facilities in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Increased resources are being directed to United Kingdom official representation, including trade and consular facilities, in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to enable our diplomatic missions there to meet new demands arising from the dramatic changes in these countries. Staffing has already been strengthened at several posts to deal with increased visa demand and with work connected with the know-how funds. Further reinforcement to meet these and other tasks will be made in the next few months.

Tunisia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the monument at Tabrouna, Tunisia, has been undertaken by Her Majesty's embassy in Tunis, in order to ensure its protection and preservation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The embassy is continuing to monitor the condition of the monument at Takrouna. A member of the embassy visited the site on 21 February.

Vietnam

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Vietnam by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude).

Mr. Maude: I visited the Socialist Republic of Vietnam from 18 to 21 February for talks with the Vietnamese Government. There were wide-ranging and useful discussions. I signed an agreement to speed up the voluntary return of boat people from Hong Kong, in which connection the Vietnamese Government will, with British financial assistance, construct a new transit centre so that by 1 May 1990 around 1,000 returnees a month can return. I explained that the continued failure of the Vietnamese Government to accept their international obligations notably towards their own citizens could not avoid being an obstacle to the development of bilateral relationships. The Vietnamese assured me of their concern to settle the boat people issue. Her Majesty's ambassador in Hanoi is continuing the discussions.

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions with Senor Diego Cordouey, Foreign Minister of Ecuador, on rain forest problems during his recent visit to London.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have discussed this matter with the Government of Ecuador on a number of occasions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I discussed a wide range of other issues with Dr. Cordovez during his recent visit to London.

Coto Donana National Park

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Spain about the conservation of the Coto Donana national park.

Mr. Maude: We recognise the international importance of the Coto Donana national park, and the concern shown by conservation bodies within Spain and more widely about its future. The European Commission is aware of possible breaches of the wild birds directive, and has begun infraction proceedings against Spain.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government intend to put forward at the third preparatory committee meeting in Geneva on 24 April to 4 May, for the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; and whether any financial support has been made available to non-governmental organisations to attend this final preparatory meeting.

Mr. Waldegrave: The third preparatory committee will be devoted largely to administrative aspects of the review conference. As convenor of the western group of non-proliferation treaty parties in Geneva, the United Kingdom has been active in the preparations. No financial support has been made available to non-governmental organisations to attend the meeting.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a breakdown of the current ivory stocks in Hong Kong according to weight and origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 15 February 1990]:* The Hong Kong Government's records do not provide a breakdown of the current ivory stocks according to weight and country of origin. However, CITES certificates show that stocks originated from the following countries:

Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

The total weight of these stocks is 254 tonnes of raw ivory and 104 tonnes of worked ivory.

WALES

Housing Grants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to revise the administrative structure of the housing grant system due to be introduced in Wales in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The day-to-day administration of the new home renovation grant system will be the responsibility of local housing authorities. My hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, announced on 22 February that implementation of the major provisions of part VIII of the 1989 Act in England and Wales will be deferred to 1 July 1990. This will allow local authorities to prepare for a smooth transition to the new system and maintain the momentum on renovation activity.

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what volumes of toxic wastes and contaminated landfill rubble has been deposited in the Cwmrhydyceirw quarry in Morriston (West Glamorgan); and whether this site is licensed for receipt of polychlorinated biphenyl contaminated waste materials.

Mr. Grist: Information on deposits at licensed disposal sites is not held centrally; it is for the licensing authority to specify the types and quantities of waste which may be deposited. I understand that the Cwmrhydyceirw quarry site is not specifically licensed by Swansea city council to accept PCB contaminated waste.

Water Pollution

Mr. Allan Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what water supply tests for bacterial and other infections have been carried out in Mid Glamorgan health district buildings in the past two years.

Mr. Grist: Mid Glamorgan health authority has a policy for the regular testing of water. Sampling is undertaken every three months at every hospital with testing undertaken at the University hospital of Wales.

M4, Earlswood-Lôn Las

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has made plans relating to the first stage of construction for the M4 missing link between Earlswood and Lôn Las to ensure that additional traffic lanes can be constructed with ease if traffic flows exceed predicted forecasts.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The design of this section of the M4 would permit an additional lane to be added in each direction with minimal disruption should future traffic levels justify it.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) in July 1988.

In addition, my Department has recently introduced a holiday play scheme for the children of members of staff. The provision of nursery facilities is being considered.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Office runs three mandatory management courses which include sessions on equal opportunities for women. In addition, and as part of its equal opportunities policy, my Department provides four women-only management courses.

Only two officers at grade six and above are employed outside Cardiff; as yet, neither has attended a training course with equal opportunities content.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's child care network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Grist: The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter of member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health, the Welsh Office and the ministerial group on women's issues, on which the Department is represented, has encouraged the development of a range of high quality child care options for both employers and parents.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Grist: The Department ran a holiday play scheme for school-age children of staff in Cardiff last summer and plans to do so again for the Easter and summer school holidays this year. The scheme is substantially self-financing, but it receives some financial support from the Welsh Office and the other Government Departments that make use of it.

The Welsh Office is looking into the possibility of providing nursery facilities for its Cardiff staff in conjunction with other Government Departments.

The Department does not arrange after-school care for the children of staff and has no immediate plans to do so.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's equal opportunities officer is a senior executive officer.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Grade	*Percentage of Women*
1	—
2	—
3	—
4	33
5	15
6	24
7	12

1. As at 1 January 1990
2. The grade categories shown include equivalent professional grades.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's policy on sexual harassment is that it will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary proceedings. Written guidance on the complaints procedure to follow in cases of sexual harassment has been made available to all staff. Two complaints have been reported in the last five years, both of which were settled to the satisfaction of the individuals concerned without the need for disciplinary action.

Pin-ups

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Peter Walker: A new equal opportunities policy statement is planned to issue to all staff this year to

encourage further good equal opportunity practice within the Department. It will remind staff that they should not display posters or pictures which might cause offence to others.

Cancer

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will provide figures for the incidence of *(a)* leukaemia, *(b)* lung cancer, *(c)* colon cancer and *(d)* stomach cancer in each district in Wales for each of the last 10 years;

(2) if he will publish up-to-date figures on the incidence of leukaemia in each district of Wales, together with the figures for each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Grist: Data for recent years are not yet available, and earlier years' figures are not readily available in the form requested. I therefore refer the hon. Gentleman to the figures given in the Welsh Office publication "Cancer Registration in Wales 1974-1984".

Llanelli General Hospital

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new junior doctors are intended to be recruited for the new Llanelli general hospital.

Mr. Grist: The staffing levels of the new Llanelli general hospital are primarily a matter for the health authority to decide within the resources available to it, subject to the normal arrangements for the appointment of junior staff within the framework of the "Achieving A Balance" agreement between the Health Departments, the professional and the NHS for the reform of the hospital medical staffing structure.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of all junior hospital doctors in the National Health Service in the whole of Wales work within the South Glamorgan health authority area.

Mr. Grist: As at 30 September 1988, a total of 30 per cent. of junior hospital doctors (whole-time equivalents) in post in the NHS in Wales were employed by South Glamorgan health authority. Junior hospital doctors includes the grades of house officer, senior house officer, registrar, senior registrar, associate specialist and senior hospital medical officer.

Bryntirion Hospital, Llanelli

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the soil sample collection procedures used in the recent tests of PCB levels carried out by the pollution inspectorate in an area adjacent to Bryntirion hospital, Llanelli, were identical to the procedures used by the university of East Anglia while carrying out the original tests in the same area, as reported in the HMSO publication ISBN 0 11 7522686.

Mr. Grist: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution took the samples on both occasions and the procedures were identical.

Old People's Homes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authority old people's homes there were in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The number of local authority old people's homes in Wales at 31 March 1979 was 200 and at 31 March 1989 it was 192.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many privately owned old people's homes there were in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The number of privately owned old people's homes in Wales at 31 March 1979 is not separately identifiable from available sources. However, the number of private and voluntary homes combined was 80. As at 31 March 1989 there were 461 private homes and 23 voluntary homes for elderly people.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to enable elderly people in Wales to meet the fees of privately owned homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: At present public support for elderly people in independent sector residential care and nursing homes is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. The proposals for the new arrangements for 1 April 1991 are set out in chapter 3 (paragraphs 3.7.6. and 3.8.2) and chapter 9 of the "Caring for People" White Paper (Cm 849).

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to encourage local authorities to open more publicly funded elderly people's homes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The "Caring for People" White Paper (Cm 849) makes it clear that local authorities will need to review the level of provision in their own homes in the light of the new community care proposals.

Tyre Dump Fire (Powys)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the environmental impact of the recent three-month long fire at a tyre dump in Powys.

Mr. Grist: The company is seeking to bring the fire under control and the position is being monitored by Radnor district council which is under a duty to supervise the waste disposal sites it licenses under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

When Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution last visited the site there was no emission of smoke and only a slight localised odour problem. Subject to a satisfactory surface seal being maintained, the situation will be contained.

I am advised that monitoring at the public water supply intake 85 km downstream by the National Rivers Authority has shown that phenol concentrations are within drinking water standards. Although there is some pollution of streams in the immediate vicinity of the fire, action on site has prevented the spread of pollution downstream.

Litter

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the maximum fine for improperly disposing of litter in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Littering as an offence under the Litter Act 1983 attracts a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale, currently £400. There are proposals in the Environmental Protection Bill to increase this to level 4 on the standard scale, currently £1,000.

Planning Aid Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has proposals to renew funding for Planning Aid Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Planning Aid Wales has submitted an application for funding under the Department's 1990-91 special grants—Environmental—programme. This is currently being considered together with other applications for funding from the limited resources available through this programme. Planning Aid Wales has already benefited from this programme, receiving over £53,000 since 1985.

Toolsheds

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether rates are charged in Wales for toolsheds used only to store tools for growing vegetables on allotments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The decision whether any particular property is non-domestic, and therefore rateable after April 1990, is a matter for the valuation officer. In reaching decisions on rateability with respect to toolsheds, the valuation officer will have regard to section 66(1)(d) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which provides that property is domestic—and so not rateable—if it is private storage premises used wholly or mainly for the storage of articles of domestic use.

Imported Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received with regard to the importation of contaminated rubble from West Germany via Max Recovery's transfer station in Swansea to direct landfill in Cwmrhydceirw quarry.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received representations from an hon. Member on behalf of constituents expressing concern about the proposed importation. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has received a letter from Swansea city council seeking advice.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to publish amended versions of Department of the Environment pamphlets on community charge reductions and the uniform business rate in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. Welsh Office leaflets on community charge benefit were distributed to all households in Wales late in 1989. There is no need to produce a separate publicity leaflet on community charge transitional relief, because the Welsh scheme does not require applications to be made in order that relief can be awarded. On business rates, I have made available since March 1989 a pamphlet, "The New Business Rating System in Wales". This has been regularly updated. The latest revision, dated January 1990, is in the Library. Copies have been made available through Welsh business organisations, district valuation offices and from the Welsh Office in response to enquiries.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time staff have been brought in to each district, borough and city council in Wales to deal specifically with the community charge or poll tax.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much extra expenditure has been incurred by each district, borough and city council in Wales on *(a)* the adaptation of current information systems and *(b)* purchasing of new technology, as a direct result of implementing the poll tax.

Mr. Peter Walker: The current and capital expenditure incurred by each district council in Wales on the implementation costs of the community charge in 1989-90 are shown in the table:

Community charge preparation costs 1989-90

Local authority	*Current budget £000*	*Capital forecast £000*
Alyn and Deeside	328	173
Colwyn	124	149
Delyn	203	0
Glyndwr	168	0
Rhuddlan	207	274
Wrexham Maelor	377	724
Carmarthen	184	0
Ceredigion	307	112
Dinefwr	182	188
Llanelli	176	0
Preseli Pembrokeshire	317	193
South Pembrokeshire	138	76
Blaenau Gwent	305	100
Islwyn	213	169
Monmouth	167	166
Newport	355	425
Torfaen	290	198
Aberconwy	193	215
Arfon	310	0
Dwyfor	194	142
Meirionnydd	282	670
Ynys Môn	176	274
Cynon Valley	103	928
Merthyr Tydfil	256	844
Ogwr	642	0
Rhondda	196	30
Rhymney Valley	381	580
Taff Ely	433	414
Brecknock	173	0
Montgomeryshire	237	63
Radnorshire	95	40
Cardiff	1,090	953
Vale of Glamorgan	392	150
Port Talbot	189	50
Lliw Valley	239	0
Neath	218	142
Swansea	934	630
Total Wales	10,774	9,072

Family Practitioner Committees

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the new general managers of family practitioner committees in Wales have had previous careers in the armed forces.

Mr. Grist: Fifty per cent.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were *(a)* the target totals and *(b)* actual expenditure for each district, borough and city council in Wales for expenditure on the implementation and administration of competitive tendering exercises during 1989.

Mr. Grist: This information is not held centrally. Quantification of these items in budgets and accounts is a matter for individual local authorities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has taken any steps to prevent individuals from the auditing firms criticised by his inspectors for audits of investment companies from participating in development of auditing policy in relation to investment business.

Mr. Redwood: If, by referring to audit policy, the hon. Member has in mind the work of the Auditing Practices Committee then I have taken no steps to influence which individuals are appointed to that committee by the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies.

Company Audits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to legislate to require auditors of companies actively to evaluate and seek evidence relating to the post balance sheet events occurring between the date of the audit report and the following annual general meeting.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will seek to legislate to require company auditors to alert the users of financial statements of the likelihood of financial insolvency;

(2) whether he will seek to legislate to require auditors to report on the financial soundness of companies.

Mr. Redwood: No. The auditors' duty is to report to members of the company. There is a presumption under the accounting principles set out in the Companies Act 1985 that the company is carrying on a business as going concern. Auditing standards already prescribe that where there are doubts about the company's ability to continue as a going concern auditors should qualify their report appropriately.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend schedule 12 to the Companies Act 1989 so as to discourage organisations seeking recognition as qualifying bodies from using objective tests to further theoretical knowledge.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend the Companies Act 1989 so as to require the supervisory bodies to provide tangible proof to any member of the public showing that they have taken active steps to monitor compliance with the rules on auditor independence.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to legislate to require auditors of all large companies to report on the effectiveness with which a company utilises its assets.

Mr. Redwood: No. It is the auditors' function to report on the company's annual accounts. It is for others to judge from those statements the performance of the company.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to legislate to require company auditors to report all departures from the Companies Acts.

Mr. Redwood: No. It is already a requirement of the Companies Act 1985 that the auditors' report shall state whether in the auditor's opinion the annual accounts have been properly prepared in accordance with the Act. There is professional guidance on how the auditor should report departures from statutory requirements.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide a list of the organisations which have written to him either supporting or opposing the implementation of section 15 of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: A number of detailed comments were received in response to my Department's recent consultative document on a draft of the regulations to implement section 15 of the Companies Act 1989. None, however, raised the question whether or not the provision should be implemented.

GEC

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to meet the chairman of GEC-Alsthom-General Electric European Gas Turbine Company to discuss investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Not at present. The company will, I have no doubt, keep us advised of its plans for any new investment in the United Kingdom as its predecessor did.

Global Warming

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to put forward proposals at the next Council of Industry Ministers to initiate industrial developments and changes in industrial design and practice to reduce discharges of gases presently causing global warming.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The agenda for Council of Ministers meetings is determined by the presidency, which is currently held by the Republic of Ireland. Environmental issues such as those cited by the hon.

Gentleman have important implications for business and may well be considered by the Industry Council in due course. However, there are no present plans for such discussion. In the meantime, the Department of Trade and Industry environmental programme already contains a range of measures designed to help and encourage firms to respond positively to the challenges and opportunities presented by environmental issues such as global warming.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, at the last meeting of the European Ministers Research Council, held in Brussels on 26 February, he put forward any proposals for *(a)* European Community collaboration on research to combat the greenhouse effect and global warming climate change and *(b)* intergovernmental and inter-institutional collaboration on environmental improvement research.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I attended the Research Council on 26 February. This included an exchange with a delegation of Members of the European Parliament on the overall 1990-94 EC R and D framework programme.

The 1990-94 framework programme includes a programme of environmental research (414 mecu or £298 million) which is 59 per cent. larger than the previous EC programme and includes research on the subjects raised by the hon. Member.

An agricultural research programme and a co-operation agreement with EFTA countries on the medical and health research programme were also adopted.

Investment (North-west)

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to improve investment in the north-west.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All Department of Trade and Industry policies are aimed at encouraging investment in the north-west and throughout the United Kingdom.

RECHAR

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how much money is available to the United Kingdom through the RECHAR scheme for the schemes he recently submitted for each of the years 1990 to 1994;

(2) what criteria qualified wards in Nottingham, North constituency for submission for RECHAR assistance; and which bodies were consulted before the decision was made;

(3) whether Nottinghamshire county council and Nottingham city council were consulted before he submitted the RECHAR list to the European Commission.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department drew the attention of county, city and district authorities to the notice published by the European Commission about the RECHAR initiative and invited representations. Representations were received from Nottinghamshire county council, among others. Among other bodies consulted was the Coalfield Communities Campaign.

Wards were considered for inclusion in the list of Government's proposals for RECHAR where they were part of a coal-mining area that had suffered sufficient coal-mining job losses to meet the criteria of the Commission's notice.

It is not yet known how much money will be available to the United Kingdom from RECHAR. I hope that the Commission's decision will be reached before the end of this year.

Investors (Protection)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to introduce an order under section 203(3) of the Companies Act 1989, standard of protection for investors, specifying when the transitional period is to end.

Mr. Redwood: As soon as it becomes clear that the transitional provisions are no longer necessary.

Takeovers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of European Economic Community takeovers of companies occurred in each member state over the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* Figures are not compiled within the Government of all takeovers of companies in each country throughout the European Economic Community. Information is compiledd for United Kingdom takeover activity and published quarterly by the Central Statistical Office in Business Bulletin "Cross Border Acquisitions and Mergers". The latest publication includes information to the third quarter of 1989 and is available in the Library.

The report on barriers to takeovers in the European Community prepared for the Department of Trade and Industry and published recently indicates that in 1988 73 per cent. of acquisitions in the European Community took place in the United Kingdom.

North-East Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *780*, he will list any changes in the proposals for the acquisition of NESL facilities by the Anglo-Greek consortium which were not made as a result of guidance from either his Department or the Tyne and Wear development corporation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Following the rejection of the shipbuilding bids for the NESL yards in July 1989 for reasons explained by my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), the Anglo-Greek consortium made an informal proposal which simply foresaw a return to new shipbuilding at North Sands in the longer term, depending on market conditions. A formal proposal on 30 October 1989 was more specific, and explicitly made reference to the development of a modern shipbuilding facility.

The business plan dated 21 December 1989 made it apparent that the scale of investment was based on future shipbuilding requirements. An additional, parallel idea to use the Southwick site for steel work was raised in January 1990. None of these changes was made at the suggestion of my Department, which has always made it clear that any proposals would need to be assessed against any

alternative plans for the sites in question, and would need formal clearance by the Commission of the European Communities.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on which dates his Department became aware that the following definitions of a permanent and irreversible closure in the European Commission sixth directive on shipbuilding of *(a)* a withdrawal of intervention fund by the relevant member state for a period of five years, *(b)* the cessation of vessel construction for a period of five years and *(c)* plans predicted on a resumption of vessel construction after a period of five years were not shared by the European Commission.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Sir Leon Brittan's letter of 12 July 1989 to my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) made clear that the Commission required yards which have been closed as counterpart for aid to remain closed to the building of ships for five years, irrespective of the provision or otherwise of intervention fund grant subsidy. Sir Leon's letter to me of 15 February 1990 made it plain that he would not approve now a notification where the proposal was predicated on a return to shipbuilding after the expiry of the five-year period.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *783*, if he will list how many jobs he expects will have been created in the Southwick area of the proposed Sunderland enterprise zone by *(a)* 31 December 1990, *(b)* 30 June 1991, *(c)* 31 December 1991, *(d)* 30 June 1992, *(e)* 31 December 1992, *(f)* 30 June 1993 and *(g)* 31 December 1993.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* It is not practicable to give a detailed breakdown of the timing of the jobs expected to be created within the Sunderland enterprise zone. This will depend on, among other things, the timetable on progress on the clearance, reclamation, and development of the sites concerned and on the plans and decisions of individual firms setting up within the zone.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice was given by officials of his Department to directors of NESL who wished to know, in May 1988, whether his Department might be sympathetic to a management buy-out of NESL.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* As a general principle, the Government would certainly not have been averse to any proposals for a management buy-out of North-East Shipbuilders Ltd. A number of other British Shipbuilders' facilities have indeed been sold on this basis. I am, however, not aware that any formal proposals were actually made by the management of NESL for such a buy-out in respect of that company.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department held with Mr. John Parker following the receipt of information that Mr. Parker was interested in assisting North South Bridge Consortium's proposals to acquire NESL in November 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* None.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to whether the letter of advice sent by the previous chairman to the right hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) on 3 July 1989 was read and agreed by the other executive board members of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* That is a matter for British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether all relevant and significant matters discussed between officials of his Department and officials of the European Commission concerning the future of NESL between the statement to the House by the right hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) on 7 December and the right hon. Member for Braintree's meeting with Sir Leon Brittan on 27 June 1989 were drawn to the attention of Ministers of his Department;

(2) whether all relevant and significant matters discussed between officials of his Department and officials of the European Commission prior to the December 1988 agreement to close North East Shipbuilders Ltd were drawn to the attention of ministers of his Department prior to the finalisation of that agreement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Yes.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek an assurance from Sir Leon Brittan that the interpretation which Sir Leon places on a declaration to the minutes of the Industry Council referred to in Sir Leon Brittan's letter to the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) of 15 February 1990 will be applied to any other member state of the European Community who contemplate the reopening of shipbuilding facilities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The EC's sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding is designed to ensure fair and equitable treatment throughout the Community in all aspects of shipbuilding support. I am sure, therefore, that the Commission will seek uniformity of treatment in respect of closed shipbuilding facilities within EC member states. We will certainly encourage it to do so.

Space

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the expenditure, actual and planned, on civil space related activities paid for from public funds in each of the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90; and for each of the years to give a breakdown as between expenditure on European Space Agency programmes and expenditure on domestic United Kingdom programmes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* The figures are as follows:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
European Space Agency programmes	80·8	90·2	87·2
National programmes	42·8	48·1	51·1
Total	123·6	138·3	138·3

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

The Attorney-General: Neither the legal secretariat to the Law Officers nor the Treasury Solicitor's Department undertakes its own management training. In the Treasury Solicitor's Department, staff at grade six level and above who are working outside headquarters receive management training at the Civil Service College. In the Crown prosecution service training on equal opportunities for women is integrated into management training and is not dealt with as a separate issue. In the period from September 1988 to January 1989 a series of industrial relations courses, which included a specific session on equal opportunities, was run for grade six officers and above. In the Serious Fraud Office, departmental training courses do not include sessions on equal opportunities for women, but members of staff may attend courses at the Civil Service College, where such sessions are a feature of the course work.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

The Attorney-General: The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, has encouraged the development of a range of high quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what childcare provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees: what childcare provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

The Attorney-General: There is no provision of child care for pre-school age children of employees in any of the Departments for which I am responsible. No child care provision is provided in the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, Crown prosecution service or the Serious Fraud Office for employees' children aged five years or over, but for the Treasury Solicitor's Department there is a holiday play scheme for 32 children which is run during half-term holidays and between terms by the Cabinet Office in conjunction with the Westminster Play Association, but there is no provision for after-school care. The holiday play scheme will continue while there is space available.

There are no plans to increase provision in the next five years in the legal secretariat to the Law Officers or the Serious Fraud Office. In the Treasury Solicitor's Department it is proposed to introduce a pre-school age nursery subject to there being space available. No decision has been made on how the nursery is to be funded. The Crown prosecution service has agreed to participate in and make a financial contribution towards a study of the feasibility of establishing a number of interdepartmental nurseries in and around central London. As part of this study, the Crown prosecution service has distributed questionnaires to all staff in the London area to find the numbers of employees who would wish to use child care facilities in the future. The service will consider shared funding of child care facilities in those areas where its provision is feasible.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

The Attorney-General: The equal opportunities officer in the legal secretariat to the Law Officers is a grade four, in the Treasury Solicitor's Department a grade six, in the Crown prosecution service a grade seven and in the Serious Fraud Office a higher executive officer.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career-break due to child care.

The Attorney-General: In the legal secretariat to the Law Officers and the Treasury Solicitor's Department the recruitment of all staff above the grade of executive officer is undertaken by the Civil Service Commission. Officers appointed to recruitment boards for administrative officer and below and promotion boards are reminded of the policy of equal opportunities in the department. In the Crown prosecution service a departmental career break scheme is being developed to ensure that those members of staff who have a break in their career for domestic reasons have the opportunity to maintain their career momentum via a departmental "keeping in touch" scheme.

The Crown prosecution service has also targeted recruitment publications aimed at mature students and women returning to work following a career break. It has provided working arrangements to suit staff with domestic commitments and has introduced flexible working terms, part-time working, and enhanced arrangements for sabattical leave. All established staff compete equally for promotion opportunities in the service.

The Serious Fraud Office has recently launched an advertising campaign to attract part-time staff with family commitments. A person would not be subject to discrimination in either recruitment to the Serious Fraud Office or promotion therein on account of their age, providing they are below the normal Civil Service retiring age.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

The Attorney-General: The proportions in each of the Departments for which I am responsible are as follows:

	Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers	*Treasury Solicitor's Department*	*Crown Prosecution Service*	*Serious Fraud Office*
A. Grade 7	0/0	11/49	164/603	0/4
B. Grade 6	0/3	14/58	16/152	3/14
C. Grade 5	2/4	4/39	2/54	2/10
D. Grade 4	0/2	0/0	0/9	0/0
E. Grade 3	1/1	0/10	0/4	0/2
F. Grade 2	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/1
G. Grade 1	0/0	0/1	0/1	0/0

Divorce Notifications (Newspapers)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he intends to take any action to prevent divorce notifications in newspapers containing the reasons for a divorce; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is no present intention to change the law relating to the content of divorce notifications in newspapers, but the matter has been referred to the Law Commission who are considering it along with the law of divorce on which they are expected to report later this year. Under the present divorce law, to provide protection against divorces being granted where the facts required do not exist, Parliament provided in section 9 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 that any person may show cause why a decree nisi of divorce should not be made absolute. The decree nisi is therefore declared in open court and any member of the public may examine the certificate of the decree and the filed evidence for this purpose. The Judicial Proceedings (Regulation of Reports) Act 1926 aligns with this policy by allowing the press to report, amongst other things, the names and addresses of the parties to a divorce, together with the statutory facts on which the petition relies. Any further restriction would conflict with the present policy of section 9.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

The Attorney-General: The policy in each of the Departments for which I am responsible is that sexual harassment at work would not be tolerated and, if appropriate, would be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

No specific guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to staff in the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department or in the Serious Fraud Office. In the Crown prosecution service, the issue of sexual harassment at work is addressed directly in the CPS equal opportunities policy statement which is held by every local office for consultation by any member of staff.

No complaints have been reported in the legal secretariat to the Law Officers or the Serious Fraud Office. In the Treasury Solicitor's Department one complaint has been made in the last five years but has subsequently been withdrawn. In the Crown prosecution service one complaint has been reported and disciplinary action is under consideration.

Crown Court Hearings

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average period between a committal and full hearing for *(a)* all crimes and *(b)* rape.

The Attorney-General: The average period between a committal and start of hearing for all defendants whose cases were completed in the Crown Court in 1989 was 12·5 weeks. This compares with 14·3 weeks in 1984 and 17·6 weeks in 1979. Information is not available for individual offences.

Pin-ups

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

The Attorney-General: Any complaint about material of this sort in any of the Departments for which I am responsible would be considered and appropriate instructions would be given.

Leasehold Reform

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Attorney-General if the Government have any plans to introduce leasehold reform —commonhold—legislation.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor announced in June 1988 that the Government had arranged for draft legislation to be prepared at the Law Commission to give effect to the proposals contained in the report of the working group on commonhold (Cm 179) under the chairmanship of Mr. T. M. Aldridge. That work is still in progress. No final decision has yet been taken about the implementation of the report, nor can I give any indication of when legislation on commonhold may be introduced.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women have been strip searched in each of the last 10 years in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: The strip-searching procedures for female prisoners were introduced at Armagh prison in November

1982. Yearly figures for the number of women strip searched are only available from 1985 onwards. The details for 1985 to 1989 are as follows:

	No.
1985	144
1986	162
1987	149
1988	145
1989	145

Police Accommodation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he is giving to the Northern Ireland police federation's representations concerning *(a)* the introduction of a provided accommodation allowance and *(b)* updating of the force rent allowance; and when he expects to lay regulations giving effect to any changes which may take effect from 1 April.

Mr. Cope: The Police Federation for Northern Ireland has not made representations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland concerning the introduction of a provided accommodation allowance for the RUC. Provided accommodation will continue to be free of rent and rates. The rent allowance for the RUC, which would have been due for updating at 1 April 1990, will not now be updated due to its replacement by the new housing allowance. The RUC (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1990 which will give effect to the change from rent allowance to housing allowance, will be laid before Parliament not later than 9 March 1990.

Railways

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the loss of revenue to Northern Ireland railways as a result of terrorist activity in each of the last five calendar or financial years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Northern Ireland Railways Co. Ltd. has informed me that because of the infrequency of incidents before 1989-90 no figures are available. The loss of revenue for 1989-90 is £581,000 to date. In addition to the security implications, there is a significant environmental impact, especially as the relative advantage of the rail service is reduced and more people switch to the road.

Youth Training

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to extend youth training programme allowances to all those participating in 16 to 19 education.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 18 February 1990]: No.*

HEALTH

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities which awarded laundry contracts inhouse and externally during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested, based on reports received from regional health authorities, is shown in the tables.

LAUNDRY CONTRACTS AWARDED DURING 1987

Health Authority and Hospital/Unit

Northern Region
- Northumberland, Prudhoe, In-house
- South Tees, District, In-house
- South West Durham, Sedgefield, In-house
- Sunderland, DGH, In-house
- West Cumbria, District, In-house

Yorkshire Region
- Bradford, District, External
- Harrogate, District, In-house

East Anglia Region
- Cambridge, District, In-house
- Peterborough, District, In-house

South East Thames Region
- Dartford, District, In-house
- Hastings, St. Helens, In-house
- Medway, District, In-house

South West Thames Region
- Merton and Sutton, District, External
- Richmond, Queen Mary's/Putney, External
- Worthing, Southlands, In-house

Wessex Region
- Salisbury, District, In-house
- Southampton, SGH, In-house
- West Dorset, Herrison, In-house

Oxford Region
- West Berkshire, Fairmile, In-house

South Western Region
- Cornwall, West Cornwall, In-house
- Frenchay, Glenside, In-house

West Midlands Region
- Coventry, Whitley, In-house
- Dudley, District, In-house
- Hereford, St. Mary's, In-house
- Mid-Staffordshire, District, In-house
- North Birmingham, Highcroft, In-house
- Rugby, District, In-house
- Sandwell, District, In-house
- South East Staffordshire, St. Matthews, In-house
- Wolverhampton, District, In-house

North Western region
- Blackburn, Queens Park, In-house
- Bolton, District, In-house
- Burnley, District, In-house
- Lancaster, District, In-house
- North Manchester, District, In-house
- Oldham, District, In-house
- Preston, Whittingham, In-house
- Rochdale, District, In-house
- Tameside, District, In-house
- Wigan, District, External

Special Health Authorities
- Eastman Dental Hospital, In-house

Laundry contracts awarded during 1988

Health Authority and hospital/unit

Northern region
- South Cumbria, District, External

Yorkshire region
- Airedale, District, In-house
- Calderdale, District, External
- Northallerton, District, In-house
- Pontefract, Southmoor, In-house
- Scarborough, St. Mary's, In-house
- Wakefield, District, External

Trent region
Nottingham, District, In-house

North West Thames region
North Bedfordshire, District, In-house

North East Thames region
Hampstead, Friern, In-house

South East Thames region
Camberwell, In-house
Lewisham, District, In-house
Maidstone, External
South East Kent, District, In-house
West Lambeth, District, In-house

South West Thames region
East Surrey, District, In-house
Mid-Surrey, District, In-house

West Midlands region
Shropshire, District, In-house
North Staffordshire, RI/St. Edwards, In-house

North Western region
Bury, District, External
South Manchester, District, In-house

Special Health Authorities
Hospital for Sick Children, In-house
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases, In-house

Consultant-Patient Ratios

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* consultants, *(b)* National Health Service patients and *(c)* patients per consultant in each year since 1979 (i) nationally and (ii) for each National Health Service region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information for *(a)* and *(b)* is given in the tables.

The information requested in *(c)* cannot be given in the form requested, because: (i) manpower figures represent a "snapshot" of staff in post on a particular day. Patient figures are aggregates over a calendar-financial year; (ii) the patient figures do not take account of the contribution given by other medical staff who may be engaged in providing treatment to in-patients, out-patients or accident and emergency patients.

Table 1: Hospital medical and dental consultants[1][3]: analysis by region at 30 September each year

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
England[2]	12,361	12,609	12,882	13,089	13,376	13,688	13,969	14,296	14,514	14,950
Northern	835	844	867	886	908	922	954	973	1,000	1,003
Yorkshire	846	852	898	909	926	911	952	979	1,003	1,037
Trent	981	1,017	1,047	1,078	1,096	1,128	1,154	1,212	1,269	1,318
East Anglian	469	484	498	508	515	538	554	563	575	608
North West Thames	1,288	1,284	1,287	1,119	1,154	1,159	1,156	1,151	1,158	1,187
North East Thames	1,293	1,305	1,320	1,511	1,546	1,535	1,584	1,547	1,478	1,486
South East Thames	1,145	1,147	1,154	1,170	1,193	1,242	1,220	1,247	1,258	1,271
South West Thames	881	898	929	897	904	920	920	933	939	942
Wessex	685	701	689	699	728	741	760	768	831	846
Oxford	545	568	585	610	620	653	686	706	722	741
South Western	745	769	781	802	808	826	846	874	888	904
West Midlands	1,184	1,201	1,226	1,250	1,276	1,321	1,364	1,421	1,451	1,480
Mersey	644	652	649	656	666	683	701	721	722	737
North Western	1,078	1,095	1,130	1,173	1,207	1,226	1,294	1,284	1,284	1,284
SHAs	631	631	634	607	624	655	654	653	596	617

[1] Figures include permanent paid and honorary staff.
[2] Staff holding two or more appointments whether with the same or different regions are counted only once. Differences in the sum of numbers of staff for all regions are due to the duplication of staff holding appointments in more than one region. Such staff are included separately in each region.
[3] Prior to 1987 figures include staff in the grade of senior hospital medical-dental officer with allowance.

Table 2: In-patient cases treated, NHS hospitals by region[1], 1979-1988/89[2]

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89
England	5,400·1	5,670·0	5,759·9	5,719·6	6,018·6	6,177·5	6,353·8	6,413·8	6,619·4	6,586·0
Northern	368·6	393·8	395·7	376·1	409·1	420·1	433·1	441·1	462·8	461·0
Yorkshire	433·8	456·9	465·5	454·0	490·6	499·9	517·5	525·3	549·8	551·5
Trent	464·9	497·3	511·9	505·2	543·2	557·9	578·4	592·4	612·9	626·1
East Anglian	201·9	216·9	219·6	213·3	229·6	238·3	250·3	253·5	264·1	269·6
North West Thames	403·3	412·7	418·1	394·4	408·5	415·6	418·8	419·0	421·6	416·2
North East Thames	455·9	473·5	474·8	512·7	526·4	534·8	541·1	530·4	527·6	521·3
South East Thames	438·9	453·1	462·2	461·4	477·3	487·8	501·6	495·2	504·7	487·8
South West Thames	312·3	320·1	324·7	315·2	329·3	338·6	344·4	347·1	351·9	344·3
Wessex	302·8	318·5	322·0	320·9	332·4	345·5	357·3	366·4	389·5	391·4
Oxford	251·9	265·0	269·7	266·3	276·5	284·6	297·5	299·3	300·4	296·4
South Western	338·9	358·0	365·8	370·3	385·3	399·0	408·0	417·4	443·2	451·6
West Midlands	547·8	575·1	582·9	591·1	619·7	644·2	666·2	673·4	708·2	689·5
Mersey	282·6	297·5	299·3	293·9	312·6	322·1	331·0	336·9	345·7	347·9
North Western	509·0	541·8	555·0	553·7	585·7	597·8	617·6	624·7	644·5	640·5
SHAs	87·7	89·8	92·6	91·0	92·3	91·4	90·9	91·7	92·5	90·9

[1] Due to NHS restructuring in 1982, figures for the four Thames regions and SHAs are not strictly comparable over the whole period.
[2] The data for in-patient cases were collected at the end of each calendar year up to 1986; from 1987-88 the data are collected at the end of each financial year.

National Health Service Wales

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what, over the last five years for which figures are available, have been the proportions of United Kingdom National Health Service expenditure spent on the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of United Kingdom gross National Health Service expenditure spent on health services in Wales

	per cent.
1985-86	5·2
1986-87	5·2
1987-88	5·2
1988-89	5·2
[1]1989-90	5·3

[1] Estimate.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out a table showing from 1979 to the latest available year (i) each district health authority in East Anglia regional health authority and (ii) average of all English district health authorities *(a)* what services have been put out to competitive tender, *(b)* what savings have been made thereby in real terms and *(c)* what estimated real cost terms per head of population column *(b)* represents.

Mr. Freeman: Comprehensive information on all services put out to tender is not held centrally in the form requested. Since 1983, health authorities have been required to tender domestic, catering and laundry services and apart from some catering services at East and West Suffolk, all of these services in the region have now been subjected to this process.

Information on savings arising from the tendering of these services in the financial years 1986-87 is set out in the table in the form requested. Information on the remaining years requested is not held centrally.

Cash savings from competitive tendering: East Anglian region

	1986-87		1987-88		1988-89	
	Cash Savings £000s	Cash Savings Per Head of Population £	Cash Savings £000s	Cash Savings Per Head of Population £	Cash Savings £000s	Cash Savings Per Head of Population £
Cambridge	0·00	0·00	0·0	0·00	105·0	0·38
East Suffolk	332·10	1·04	27·6	0·88	0·0	0·00
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	77·90	0·40	46·4	0·24	29·0	0·14
Huntingdon	7·20	0·06	0·0	0·00	0·0	0·00
Norwich	648·60	1·39	369·1	0·80	51·0	0·11
Peterborough	21·60	0·11	29·8	0·14	96·0	0·46
West Norfolk and Wisbech	328·50	1·78	0·0	0·00	0·0	0·00
West Suffolk	224·20	1·00	242·0	1·08	0·0	0·00
England	134·60	0·65	104·7	0·47	35·3	0·14

Note:
All savings are expressed at 1989 pay and prices levels.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* private, *(b)* employer, *(c)* local authority and *(d)* other means-funded child care places there are in each travel-to-work area for each of the past 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally in the form requested. The information collected centrally about day care places in England is published in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March" and is available in the Library.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report: "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom."

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is one of several recent reports that have informed our current thinking. We are considering the child care aspects as part of our integrated policy for the implementation of the Children Act in 1991.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Freeman: The Department runs holidy play schemes for employees' children aged between five and 11 years and plans to continue doing so. No nursery facilities or after-school care are at present provided for parents employed in the Department. However, we are undertaking a feasibility study into the provision of nursery facilities and we are contributing to a study into interdepartmental provision being co-ordinated by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service. The holiday play schemes are financed by parental and departmental contributions, and it is likely that any other child care provision would be financed in a similar way.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Freeman: The equal opportunities officer for the Department of Health is a grade five.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Freeman: This Department is an equal opportunities employer and its equal opportunities policy forbids discrimination on the grounds of sex or ethnic origin. Members of recruitment and promotion boards have this policy brought to their attention on each occasion that they undertake these duties. Wherever possible recruitment and promotion boards have female members.

The Department has, as an aid to recruitment and retention, introduced a number of flexible working patterns. These include part-time working, job sharing, flexible working hours and career breaks together with a scheme for keeping in touch with existing employees away from the Department. More flexibilities are under active consideration.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of grades seven, six, five, four, three, two and one.

Mr. Freeman: In the Department of Health as at February 1990, 11·1 per cent. of civil servants at grade two, 16·7 per cent. at grade three, 31·5 per cent. at grade four, 29·9 per cent. at grade five, 24·1 per cent. at grade six, and 25·1 per cent. at grade seven are women. There are no female officers at grade one level.

Under-fives Provision

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total public expenditure on local authority day nurseries, local authority playgroups and grants to the voluntary sector for provision for under-fives for each year from 1975-76; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of these years.

Mr. Freeman: Total local authority social service departments' net current expenditure on day nurseries and playgroups plus Departmental grants to the voluntary sector for provision for the under fives for the years 1975-76 to 1987-88 are set out in cash terms. This includes expenditure on day nurseries and playgroups supported by, but not directly run by, the authorities. Final expenditure data for local authorities in 1988-89 is not yet available:

Net current expenditure

£ thousand

Year	*Local authority day nurseries*	*Local authority play-groups*	*Grants to voluntary sector*	*Total*
1975-76	24,352	1,909	147	26,408
1976-77	30,136	2,389	230	32,755
1977-78	33,495	2,663	268	36,426
1978-79	37,654	2,965	359	40,978
1979-80	44,153	3,888	374	48,415
1980-81	58,099	4,543	478	63,120
1981-82	66,227	5,378	564	72,169
1982-83	73,084	5,789	671	79,544
1983-84	79,449	5,947	1,397	86,793
1984-85	84,743	6,299	2,763	93,805
1985-86	86,094	6,841	2,739	95,674
1986-87	97,751	8,974	2,802	109,527
1987-88	104,934	10,913	1,814	117,661

The voluntary sector expenditure quoted relates to grants made by the Department to voluntary organisations for provision for children under five. It does not include any grants made by health authorities or local authorities for which no information is available centrally. Expenditure in the period 1984-85 to 1986-87 includes grants totalling over £5·5 million paid under the Department's first under-fives initiative.

The total figures quoted represent the following percentages of the gross domestic product for each of the years in question:

Year	*Percentage of GDP*
1975-76	0·024
1976-77	0·025
1977-78	0·024
1978-79	0·024
1979-80	0·023
1980-81	0·027
1981-82	0·028
1982-83	0·028
1983-84	0·028
1984-85	0·028
1985-86	0·026
1986-87	0·028
1987-88	0·027

General Practitioners

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why the figure of 30 was chosen as the cut-off point on the Jarman index for general practitioners to receive deprivation payments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A cut-off point of 30 on the Jarman index was chosen to target the deprivation payments on those practices that serve areas of highest deprivation. A figure of 30 means that some 9 per cent. of the population in England will attract a payment for their general practitioner in some 5 per cent. of the wards.

Private Dentists

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average charge made by private dentists in England and Wales for the initial 15-minute consultation;

(2) what percentage of dentists practising in England and Wales in each year since 1980 have not treated any patients under the National Health Service;

(3) what percentage of dentists who previously provided dental care under the National Health Service have opted instead to provide private treatment only, in the last 10 years, listed by year;

(4) what percentage of those treated have received dental care from the private sector in the last 10 years, listed by year.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not keep records of the extent or cost of private treatment or of the number of dentists practising privately.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the progress of work towards the audit of energy efficiency within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The audit of energy efficiency is being conducted jointly by the audit branch of the Department of Health and the Audit Commission. It is intended that the Audit Commission will assume full responsibility for the audit of the NHS in October 1990 as announced in the National Health Service White Paper. The energy audit is being conducted at the majority of health authorities in England and it is expected that the final report will be published towards the end of 1990. The audit has been extended to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and France based on the approach pioneered in England. The audit methodology is based upon research carried out by Audit Commission, the Department's audit branch, and guidance on energy efficiency promulgated in Encode.

Westminster and Chelsea Hospital Scheme

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give increased funding to the North-West Thames regional health authority to reflect the increased cost of the Westminster and Chelsea hospital scheme;

(2) what are the reasons for the increased capital costs of the Westminster and Chelsea hospital scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The total construction cost of the Chelsea and Westminster hospital is projected to be £177 million when completed. North West Thames regional health authority reviewed its capital programme in January as a result of these and other increasing costs, which are due to the high and increasing cost of building in London, and the fall in residential property values. A number of schemes have been deferred for 18 months to two years. North West Thames regional health authority, however, expect that proceeds from land sales will more than cover the cost of the Chelsea and Westminister hospital.

National Health Service Reforms

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of each of the consultancy contracts entered into by his Department in connection with the National Health Service reforms.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is as follows:

Purpose of contract	*Anticipated total cost* £
Launch to the Staff of the National Health Service of the White Paper	1,168,000
Launch to the Staff of the National Health Service of the Self Governing Hospitals Initiative	838,000
Development of the National Health Service Communications Programme to improve communications between National Health Service Management and Staff	994,000
Report on contracting arrangements for patient services	6,325
Working on costing for patient services contracts Work on costing for patient services contracts within Wirral Health Authority	70,000
Analysis of the informal cost sharing arrangements between Medical Schools and Teaching Hospitals in Southampton Health Authority	64,350
Production of a booklet on the outpatient environment	17,000
Development of training material for Capital Charges	128,000
Production of General Practitioner's Funding Programme Leaflet for General Practitioner's on prescribing budgets Artwork/layout of a second Working Paper on prescribing budgets Work on Indicative Prescribing Budgets	109,126
Investigation of District Information Systems	60,800
Co-ordination of my Department's Information projects	71,600
New arrangements for approval and monitoring of strategic Information Technology projects	12,000
Investigation of the Information Technology requirements for providers of patient services	14,300
Investigation of the Information Technology implications of proposed changes to Minimum Data sets	14,300
Investigation of the requirements for patient identification on existing computer systems	14,300
Investigation of the impact of the White Paper recommendations on existing computer based outpatient systems	14,300
Development of an Information Technology strategy for the National Health Service	523,000
Development of National Health Service Trusts. Financial Management simulation exercise	72,600
National Health Service Trusts leadership and management skills study	19,000
Recommendations on support for potential National Health Service Trusts	15,000
Development of Learning Sets for potential community care National Health Service Trusts	75,000
Preparation of proposals for guidance and training for top Management in the National Health Service, to support introduction of local pay flexibility	57,000
To investigation of the costing methods in the National Health Service and determination of the most appropriate for application in support of contract price setting	40,000

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of his Department's contracts with outside consultants on the National Health Service hospital service reforms deals with the quality of services provided under National Health Service contracts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No contracts with outside consultants have concerned quality of services to be provided under National Health Service hospital service contracts but health authorities have developed quality specification for the specimen contracts published in "Contracts for Health Services: Operating Contracts".

Ambulance Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total cost of the ambulance staff pay award in each of its two years for *(a)* the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* England only.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Estimated increases over 1988-89 costs of the revised pay offer, excluding local flexibility payments from 1 October 1990, are in the table:

Increase in employers' pay costs for ambulance staff	*United Kingdom £million*	*England £million*
1989-90	23·1	18·8
1990-91	37·2	30·3

Pregnant Women (Tests)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which district health authorities the AFP test is routinely offered to pregnant women; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. However, a departmental survey conducted last year showed that the test was offered in about 60 per cent. of districts and was increasingly becoming available.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which district health authorities the ante-natal maternal serum screening test for Down's syndrome is routinely offered to pregnant women; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The use of maternal serum screening for Down's syndrome is a procedure under research at the medical college of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. I understand that the procedure offers early identification of about half the women with a Down's syndrome foetus who can then be offered amniocentesis for definitive diagnosis test. The test is not yet provided as part of routine antenatal care outside the City and Hackney health district, but some districts are referring women known to be at risk to St. Bartholomew's and a few other centres are starting trials of the procedure.

Physiotherapy, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of the district physiotherapy service in Liverpool.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The planning and development of the physiotherapy service in Liverpool is a matter for the Liverpool district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the authority, Mr. J. B. Fitzpatrick.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will require the document "Application for National Health Service Trust Status" to be given by Mersey regional health authority to its employees for the purposes of consultation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: When, subject to the passage of the necessary legislation, applications for National Health Service trust status are submitted, we will look to regional health authorities to make whatever arrangements they consider necessary to ensure that those with an interest, including staff, are consulted about the proposals.

EC Intervention Butter

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether National Health Service hospitals are permitted to sell European Community intervention butter on their premises at a profit.

Mr. Freeman: No. The butter that health authorities receive via the intervention board is for the use of patients and staff only, and we have no knowledge of any such butter being sold at a profit.

In-patients

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average length of in-patient stay on *(a)* 30 September 1979 and *(b)* 30 September 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Average length of stay in days of patients treated in National Health Service hospitals in England (by sector of treatment)

	1979	*1988*
Acute medical	11·2	8·2
Acute surgical	8·1	7·2
Geriatrics	77·5	41·4
Maternity	6·0	4·0

Sources:
1979—Hospital in-patient inquiry.
1988—Hospital episode system.

This information is drawn from Department of Health statistical bulletin 2/1/90 published in January 1990. Copies of the bulletin have been placed in the Library.

Cardiac Patients, Yorkshire

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had concerning the number of beds for cardiac patients in the Leeds Western health authority area; if he will review the provision of beds for cardiac patients within the Yorkshire regional health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of letters about cardiac services in Yorkshire RHA. The local provision of services is the responsibility of the health authority concerned; the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bryan Askew, chairman of Yorkshire regional

health authority for further information. The hon. Member will know that Yorkshire regional health authority is currently reviewing its provision of cardiothoracic services.

Carers

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what illnesses and accidents have been identified as particularly associated with carers; and what plans he has to help reduce this incidence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no specific information about carer-related illness and accidents. The provision of practical support for carers is the second of the key objectives identified in the White Paper "Caring for People". The White Paper emphasises that assessments should take account of the carer's wishes, and of his or her ability to continue to provide care. Social services authorities should seek to provide practical support and respite care where necessary.

Sexual Harassment

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Freeman: The Civil Service policy on sexual harassment is set out in the programme of action to achieve equal opportunities for women in the Civil Service which was published by Cabinet Office in 1984. Sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and is dealt with as a disciplinary matter through the normal complaints procedures.

The Department of Health has brought this policy, together with guidance on complaints procedures, to the attention of all staff in a departmental circular. Records are not kept of any complaints which are dealt with by immediate line management but serious complaints are referred to the Department's personnel division for appropriate action. Since Department of Health records began in April 1989, following the separation of the Department of Health and Social Security, there have been no such referrals.

Well Women Clinics

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of well women clinics in each regional health authority in England and Wales.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Child Care

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to monitor child care provision offered by local authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities regularly provide the Department with statistics about the provision for pre-school children in their locality including the services they provide themselves. This is published annually in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March" and is available in the Library.

Weil's Disease

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of cases of Weil's disease in each health authority area in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 February 1990]*: Laboratory reports of leptospirosis to the communicable disease surveillance centre provided by health authorities for England and Wales are given in the following table. The figures include Weil's disease. There are a number of different serogroups of leptospira causing a range of clinical infections. Leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae is the serogroup which may give rise in this country to the clinical presentation of Weil's disease. For the period 1979-89, leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae accounted for roughly one third of the laboratory reports of leptospirosis.

National Health Service region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Northern	2	—	4	—	1	3	5	—	2	1	1
Yorkshire	3	—	1	3	3	1	4	3	4	2	10
Trent	3	2	4	4	6	2	4	6	3	—	2
East Anglia	3	—	—	2	2	1	3	—	2	3	1
North West Thames	—	—	2	3	5	3	—	2	3	1	1
North East Thames	2	—	—	—	4	—	2	1	1	2	2
South East Thames	3	—	—	2	2	—	4	2	1	3	1
South West Thames	—	—	2	1	—	1	—	1	1	1	1
Wessex	4	—	5	2	3	5	7	5	5	2	7
Oxford	3	1	3	—	5	1	4	1	4	2	5
South Western	4	2	2	—	19	10	18	14	12	9	11
West Midlands	—	1	1	4	5	4	7	3	6	9	4
Mersey	5	—	—	1	1	3	2	1	5	1	2
North Western	2	3	—	4	8	5	—	2	7	7	2
Wales	1	2		1	4	2	5	4	—	3	3
TOTAL	35	11	25	27	68	41	65	45	56	46	53

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will express Ealing's rates as a community charge for *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87, *(c)* 1987-88 and *(d)* 1989-90; what a community charge of (i) £450 and (ii) £494 in Ealing would be expressed as a rate poundage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It would not be meaningful to convert rate poundages into community charges in the way requested. It is our intention when community charges are finally set to say what the increase would have been in domestic rates had that taken the place of the community charge.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to include in his orders for community charge capping a requirement for affected councils to notify all charge payers of the new rate of charge; if he will estimate the cost of this measure; and what is his policy as to whether that cost will be born by the council as part of its level of spending that central government will have approved.

Mr. Chope: If any authority were to be capped, it would be necessary for the charging authority or authorities for the area concerned to inform chargepayers of the new level of community charges which would result. As my right hon. Friend has made clear, it would not be right for him to speculate on the operation of any capping scheme which might need to be introduced for 1990-91.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report* the calculations showing how the London borough of Newham contributes £3·06 million to the safety net arrangements for each of the elements described in the annex to the Revenue Support Grant Transition Report HC50 of January.

Mr. Chope: The adjustment to Newham's revenue support grant entitlement for 1990-91 of −£3,057,835 set out in the revenue support grant transitional report (England) was calculated as 53·624562 per cent. of the difference between the figure arrived at under paragraph 3 of the annex to that report (the amount to be raised from the domestic sector in 1990-91: £49,014,662) and the figure arrived at under paragraph 2 of that annex (the amount raised from the domestic sector in 1989-90: £54,716,964). 53·624562 is the percentage referred to in paragraph 4 of the annex.

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average community charge to be levied in each of the district council areas of Shropshire and Powys.

Mr. Chope: No returns providing information on average charges have been received by the Department or by the Welsh Office for the districts concerned.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 27 February, *Official Report*, columns *173-74*, to the hon. Member for Conventry, South-East, and his reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *741*, he will give any information he has about the level of personal community charges.

Mr. Chope: No. At the moment I have information for only a small miniority of authorities.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many exemptions have been given to disabled people eligible to pay the community charge; and if he will list the categories of people who have *(a)* been exempted from the community charge and *(b)* sought such exemptions but have been rejected.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the position of disabled people and their requirement to meet payments in connection with the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We continue to receive representation on all aspects of the community charge. Generous help is available to disabled people with low incomes who are subject to a personal community charge. The community charge benefit scheme includes a disability premium which means that disabled people may qualify for rebates at higher levels of income than other claimants. Disabled people who have not previously paid rates may be eligible for extra help under the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult, whether the proposed reduction of 28 per cent. in the local payers' contribution to local expenditure in Bedfordshire assumes an increase in the per adult contribution made by central Government; and whether he will publish the per adult figures for the central Government contribution in each case together with figures showing that contribution as a percentage of the local payers' contribution.

Mr. Christopher Chope *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: The Government have not proposed a specific increase in local contribution to expenditure in Bedfordshire. I refer the hon. Member to the answer to him on 27 February, *Official Report* column *179*. Equivalent figures for Bedfordshire are as follows:

External support for Bedfordshire

	External support per adult	*External support as percentage of rate/ chargepayer contribution*
	£	
Underlying 1990-91 assumed community charge with safety net	478	162·1
Underlying 1989-90 average rate bill per adult	412	126·9
Underlying assumed long run community charge	528	216·0

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult, whether the proposed reduction of 34 per cent. in the local payer's contribution

to local expenditure in Berkshire assumes an increase in the per adult contribution made by central Government; and whether he will publish the per adult figures for the central Government contribution in each case together with figures showing that contribution as a percentage of the local payer's contribution.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* The Government have not proposed a specific increase in local contribution to expenditure in Berkshire. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him on 27 February, *Official Report*, column 179. Equivalent figures for Berkshire are as follows:

External support for Berkshire

	External support per adult	*External support as percentage of rate/ chargepayer contribution*
	£	
Underlying 1990-91 assumed community charge with safety net	448	172·5
Underlying 1989-90 average rate bill per adult	363	121·2
Underlying assumed long run community charge	502	244·2

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment up to what expenditure figure per head of population Tonbridge and Malling borough council will be able to spend in 1990-91 to enable its comunity charge payers to pay no more than £3 a week over their 1989-90 rates under the transitional relief scheme for individuals he announced in October 1989.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* There will be no increase greater than the maximum allowed by the transitional relief scheme provided the community charge set by Tonbridge and Malling is no more than £227·69. It is not possible to estimate the level of spending by Tonbridge and Malling borough council which would give rise to a change at this level since the charge depends largely on spending by Kent county council and the use both authorities make of reserves.

Local Authorities (Reserves and Balances)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the reductions in local authority reserves and balances for 1989-90 and those assumed for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities have planned to use £625 million of rate fund revenue account balances and £162 million of housing revenue account balances in 1989-90. Information on planned use of balances in 1989-90 on other accounts is not available.

In 1990-91 it has been assumed for the purpose of calculating the community charge for standard spending that authorities do not make any use of rate fund revenue account balances. No assumptions have been made about the use of housing revenue account balances in 1990-91.

Environmental Protection

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to hold any consultation with the countryside interpretation unit, based at the Open university in Milton Keynes, following his announcement to the Countryside Commission on 13 December, of new planning arrangements for environmental protection of the countryside.

Mr. Moynihan: On 13 December my right hon. Friend announced publication of draft planning guidance on "The Countryside and the Rural Economy", on which comments were invited by 19 February. The 310 or so responses so far received do not include one from the countryside interpretation unit, but it will be possible to consider any comments the unit wishes to make if these are submitted soon.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the expected values of building contracts for *(a)* new build and *(b)* repair and maintenance, managed by Property Holdings after 1 April, for each of the next three years on the common user estate; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the previous three years under the old Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope: The table lists the expenditure on, or for future years provision for, design and construction costs on new builds for the six years requested. For maintenance, the figures sought are not available for 1991-92 and 1992-93, as there is to be a further reallocation of responsibilities between Property Holdings and Departments which will take effect from 1 April 1991.

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
New build	71	53	64	89	88	85
Maintenance	73	101	99	108	n.a.	n.a.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the net income levels planned for Property Services Agency services for each of the next three years from 1 April.

Mr. Chope: The net income of PSA Services in the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 will depend on the volume of business won in competition. For planning purposes it is currently assumed that the operating surplus, after any eligible charges for depreciation and interest on capital, and before extraordinary items, will be as follows:

£ million

1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Nil	7	28

These figures are, however, subject to review in the light of the proposed privatisation of PSA Services.

Dr. Martin Holdgate

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to obtain a transcript of the lecture by Dr. Martin Holdgate on the environment given at the Royal Society on 26 February for his Department's Library.

Mr. Trippier: A transcript of Dr. Holdgate's David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies lecture has been obtained and lodged in the Department of the Environment library and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Correspondence

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes dated 8 December (reference HU/PSO/40389/89).

Mr. Chope: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes dated 8 September (reference HU/PSO/30545/89).

Mr. Chope: I replied to my hon. Friend on 27 February.

Housing Associations

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new subsidised houses for rent housing associations have built in each year since 1970; and how many they plan to build in the next five years.

Mr. Chope: Numbers of housebuilding completions for rent and of renovations for rent by housing associations in England are as follows:

	Completions[1]	Renovations[2]
1970	8,200	2,700
1971	10,200	5,000
1972	6,900	4,200
1973	8,300	3,200
1974	9,300	4,000
1975	13,700	4,600
1976	14,400	13,400
1977	24,200	18,800
1978	20,600	13,100
1979	16,300	17,200
1980	19,300	14,700
1981	16,800	11,200
1982	11,100	17,400
1983	14,200	14,500
1984	13,700	18,500
1985	11,200	11,400
1986	10,000	12,700
1987	9,600	11,100
1988	9,100	11,500
1989[3]	8,700	[4]9,500

P = provisional

[1] Before 1980 completions data includes dwellings built for sale (co-ownership).

[2] Before 1978 refers to work approved, thereafter to work completed. Before 1985 includes hostel bedspaces (some 2,000 1984). From 1981 includes improvement for sale (11,800 sales up to 30 September 1989).

[3] Provisional.

[4] January to September.

The Department does not make forecasts of housebuilding completions; the Housing Corporation publishes details of its approved development programme for registered housing associations—a copy is in the Library—and these reflect the substantial increase in resources for housing associations in the current public expenditure plans.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the transfer of local government housing departments to housing associations.

Mr. Chope: Our criteria are set out in the guidelines, "Large Scale Voluntary Transfers of Local Authority Housing to Private Bodies", a copy of which is in the Library.

PCBs and Ugilec

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will conduct a study on the comparative environmental risks of polychlorinated biphenyls and ugilec.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Commission of the European Communities has recently made a proposal to the Council of Ministers for a directive to prohibit the marketing and use of ugilec 141 and ugilec 121 in the Community. I understand that neither of these substances has been used to a significant extent in this country. However, the Government will be pressing for a full assessment, at the Community level, of the risks posed by these substances compared with the risks of PCBs which they are intended to replace.

British Sport Exhibition

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to British sport to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 5 March to 9 March.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implementing of competitive tendering of refuse contracts by local authorities in East Anglia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Local authorities in England that do not qualify for exemption on de minimis grounds are required to put certain of their services, including refuse collection, out to tender in accordance with a timetable prescribed in the Local Government 1988 (Defined Activities) (Competition) (England) Regulations 1988, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Different authorities are required to have completed the tendering process for different services by varying dates between 1 August 1989 and 1 January 1992. This timetable was designed not only to phase the tendering process for authorities but also to assist contracts by ensuring that not all services were being put out to tender at the same time.

No comprehensive information is available as yet about the implementation of the legislation in relation to particular authorities or services, and it would only be possible to compile such information at disproportionate cost.

An in-depth research project is currently being carried out on behalf of the Department to assess the impact of the legislation on a representative sample of authorities drawn from the country as a whole. This will examine costs incurred and savings made. We expect the first phase to be completed early in the summer. Local authorities have also been asked to complete a questionnaire providing information on the number of contracts awarded to DSOs and private contractors and the responses to that questionnaire are now being processed.

Mr. Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out a table showing from 1979 to the latest available year (i) each district council in Norfolk and (iii) each district council in Suffolk, (ii) average of all English district councils: *(a)* what services have been put out to competitive tender, *(b)* what savings have been made thereby in real terms and *(c)* what estimated real terms cost per head of population over 18 years column *(b)* represents;

(2) if he will set out a table showing from 1979 to the latest available year (i) Suffolk county council, (ii) Norfolk county council and (iii) average of all shire counties: *(a)* what services have been put out to competitive tender, *(b)* what savings have been made thereby in real terms and *(c)* what estimated real terms cost per head of population over 18 years column *(b)* represents.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave him today on the subject of competitive tendering. Information about services put out to tender on a voluntary basis before the Local Government Act 1988 came into force is not available centrally.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to bring forward further measures to oblige local authorities to put out more services to competitive tender.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no immediate plans to extend the number of services which authorities are required to put out to tender under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which services have been put out to competitive tender by London boroughs, indicating in each case whether they have gone to in-house staff or out to private contractors.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing from 1983 to the last available year, for Chelmsford borough council and Essex county council *(a)* what services have been put out to competitive tender, *(b)* what savings have been made in cash and real terms and *(c)* what estimated savings per head of population aged 18 years and over have been made in *(b)*.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friends to the replies that I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter).

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers, at grade six level and above, working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Chris Patten: All the management training courses used by the Department have an equal opportunities content, and in the case of the Department's own courses this is currently being reviewed and strengthened. Courses specifically aimed at women in middle management are also available. Figures on the proportion of senior managers outside headquarters who have received training on equal opportunities for women are not available.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the number of local authority employees by sex.

Mr. Chope: In mid-1989 local authorities in the United Kingdom employed 1,165,000 male staff and 1,768,000 female staff. These and further details are published by the Central Statistical Office in an article "Employment in the public and private sectors" in the December 1989 issue of *Economic Trends*.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility for the European Commission's child care network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Patten: This report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up, and how parents who wish to do so can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, has encouraged the development of a range of high-quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Ms. Walley To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of the employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Patten: My Department supports an interdepartmental holiday play scheme in central London and, with the trades union side, has provided a play scheme to support residential training courses. The Property Services Agency, in co-operation with the Home Office, is arranging a play scheme in Croydon in the spring.

In central London we have undertaken a feasibility study for a nursery; studies are also in hand for a play scheme-nursery at the Building Research Establishment and we are looking at the possibility of co-operating with other employers in providing child care at our regional offices and outside London in the south-east. These studies include an analysis of the funding options.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Chris Patten: Grade 5—assistant secretary.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department has a policy of fair and open competition in recruitment. The criterion for age is that new entrants must be able to give effective service before retirement; for example the upper age limits for clerical recruitment is 60. Promotion is wholly on merit. We offer staff career breaks of up to five years, based on special leave. We encourage staff to return by running a keeping in touch scheme and we will shortly be running training for staff returning to work. We offer part-time working, job sharing and flexible working hours.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of grades seven, six, five, four, three, two and one.

Mr. Chris Patten: The number of women employed at grades 7-1 in DOE (Central) at 1 March 1990 was as follows:

Grade	*Women*	*Per cent.*
7	98	16
6	4	4
5	18	14
4	1	14
3	4	12

At present no women are employed in grades two and one.

Rehousing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities that accept domestic violence as a criterion for rehousing.

Mr. Chope: This information is not available centrally. It is for each local authority to decide its own policy on allocating its own housing, and it is not required to inform my Department.

Sexual Harassment

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken;

(2) whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Chris Patten: Sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and is dealt with as a disciplinary matter. Guidance on this policy has been issued to all staff making clear that, among other things, the display of such items as sexually explicit calendars is unacceptable. No central record of complaints was kept until mid-1986. Since then there have been five complaints wyhich have been fully investigated. It is not the Department's practice to publish the disciplinary action taken in individual cases.

Tyres

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce regulations to control the dumping and recycling of tyres and the processes connected therewith; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The introduction of regulations would not be appropriate. The treatment and disposal of waste tyres is already subject to licensing controls by waste disposal authorities under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. These controls are being strengthened in the Environmental Protection Bill and proposals for a duty of care will also require producers and handlers to avoid risks of pollution or harm to human health in their treatment, keeping and disposal of all wastes, including tyres.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the moneys allocated for public relations and advertising by Leeds development corporation in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Moynihan: Leeds development corporation's budget for promotion and publicity, which includes the corporation's activities in marketing its area is £320,000 in 1989-90 and £480,000 in 1990-91.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sum Leeds development corporation has spent on advertising and display signs.

Mr. Moynihan: The amount spent by Leeds Development Corporation since designation in June 1988 on promotion and publicity is £488,000 of which £26,500 has been spent on display signs.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the compulsory purchase powers of Leeds development corporation outside the designated Leeds development corporation area; and what guidelines are issued by his Department in relation to the use of such powers.

Mr. Moynihan: An urban development corporation is empowered by section 142 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to acquire compulsorily land outside its area which is adjacent to its designated area and required for purposes connected with the regeneration of its area; or required for the provision of services, whether or not the land is adjacent to its area. The Department has drawn UDC's attention to these statutory provisions and their interpretation.

Council House Sales

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the latest available figures for the number of houses or flats sold to tenants under section 164 of the Local Government and Housing Act for every local authority.

Mr. Chope: Section 164 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 brings within the right to buy housing, other than sheltered housing, which is particularly suitable for elderly people and was first let on or after 1 January 1990. The change in the law applies only where the tenant claimed the right to buy on or after 1 March, so sales are unlikely to be completed for some time. An existing non-sheltered property, first let before 1 January, may still be excluded from the right to buy, but only if the Secretary of State determines on the application of the landlord that it is particularly suitable for elderly people and was let for occupation by a person of pensionable age. No application for a determination has yet been received.

Waste Imports

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations are currently in force to control and prevent the importation of waste for direct landfill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The import of hazardous waste for any kind of disposal is controlled through the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988. Under these regulations, shipments of hazardous waste must be pre-notified to the disposal authority who have certain powers of objection. But, the import of waste for direct landfill cannot be prevented where the waste presents no danger to animal or plant health.

However, the Government have made clear their view that the transfrontier shipment of waste for direct landfill is generally not justified. We are seeking powers in the Environmental Protection Bill which would allow the prohibition of imported wastes where this is necessary either to prevent risk of pollution or harm to human health, or in order to conserve facilities or resources for dealing with waste.

Palace of Westminster Rifle Range

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 28 February, whether any work other than safety work has been carried out on the Palace of Westminster rifle range; and what is the annual cost of providing this facility for hon. Members and others.

Mr. Chope: Safety work, and the consequent making good, was carried out to allow the range to continue to be used for rifle shooting and to extend its use to pistol shooting. Apart from heating and lighting, which is not separately monitored, the only other costs borne on the parliamentary works subhead (class XX, vote 18) is for occasional minor maintenance.

Waste Management

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply made in Standing Committee H considering the Environmental Protection Bill, by the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, 22 February, *Official Report*, column 688, which organisations and institutions will be consulted on the regulations governing the criteria to be adopted for accrediting potential persons fit and proper to manage wastes.

Mr. Trippier: As is customary, a wide range of organisations representing local authorities, industry—including the waste management industry—and environmental interests will be consulted on both the draft regulations and on the guidance to local authorities. Together these will set the framework for the authorities to determine whether persons are fit and proper to hold waste management licences.

Homelessness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 on levels of homelessness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will encourage greater efficiency in the management and utilisation of council housing, and should therefore make a positive contribution to reducing levels of homelessness.

Council House Rents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations were received on the possible effect of part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 on council house rents during its passage through the House.

Mr. Chope: Various representations were received, principally that council rents should be set at levels which the tenants can afford and should not be subject to unreasonable sudden increases. Both these objectives will be met if councils follow the guidelines set for them within the new system. The level of council rents remains a matter for individual councils.

Storm Damage

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of financial assistance offered to local authorities along the north Devon coast in respect of capital costs incurred in relation to recent storm damage.

Mr. Chope: We wrote to local authorities on 6 February indicating that the Department would be prepared to consider issuing in appropriate circumstances additional capital allocations or borrowing approvals in respect of expenditure in 1989-90 and supplementary credit approvals in respect of expenditure in 1990-91 incurred as a result of the storms of 16 and 17 December or 25 January of floods in the Severn valley following 29 January. Applications should be submitted by 30 June 1990. None have yet been received from authorities in Devon.

Water Privatisation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what customer service committees covering which geographical areas in England had been brought into being under the Water Act 1989 by 31 January.

Mr. Trippier: It is for the Director General of Water Services to establish customer service committees under the Water Act 1989. He announced on 27 February the appointment of a chairman for each of the 10 committees which between them will cover the whole of England and Wales.

Water Charges

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he made appropriate adjustments as described in the final sentence of the then Minister responsible for water's reply to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on 14 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *213*, before he announced his proposals for the K factor of the West Kent water company on 7 February.

Mr. Trippier: Yes.

Garden Festival Site, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been spent to date on the reclamation of land at the international garden festival site, Liverpool; what is the annual maintenance cost; and what consideration he has given to the designation of the site as a royal park.

Mr. Moynihan: The garden festival site was reclaimed as part of a wider land reclamation scheme in the Liverpool south docks area, the total cost of which was £10·6 million. The current annual maintenance cost of the festival park is £200,000. Royal parks are of special origin and significance and there is no intention to add to their number.

Local Authorities (Economic Development)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet prepared the regulations under section 33 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department has now sent copies of draft regulations to the local authority associations and others for comment. I have arranged for a copy of the draft to be placed in the library of the House.

The regulations cover those restrictions which will apply to the use of the new power for local authorities to promote economic development. They follow the proposals contained in the Government's consultation paper of August 1989, with some changes.

The requirement for non-local education authorities to agree individual education and training proposals with their education authority, is replaced by a requirement for agreement to a broad programme of activities. There will be a period during which such programmes can be agreed.

The requirement to get agreement of the authority in whose area another local authority may be planning an activity is replaced by a requirement to consult.

Instead of prohibition on "soft loans", their true cost is to be identified in a special memorandum account.

The cities of Exeter, Hereford, Worcester and York and the London borough of Ealing are to be added to the list of authorities allowed to give financial assistance above the value of £10,000 to businesses conducted with a view to a profit.

Annual average levels of unemployment have been used instead of a single month's figures as one of the qualifications for designating authorities as able to give such assistance.

Procedures for the notification of local authority aid to the European Commission will be contained in further regulations, which will not come into effect before 1 July 1990.

The draft regulations provide for the restrictions to apply from 1 April 1990 to the new power. They will extend from 1 July 1990 to activities for the promotion of economic development carried on under any other enactment.

Waste Water Treatment

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the study into the environment and financial implications of the draft directive on municipal waste water treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have now received the report commissioned from Consultants in Environmental Sciences Limited which assesses the environmental effects and the costs of treating all sewage before discharge to estuaries and coastal waters. On the environmental side the report does not identify any firm evidence that present policies have a detrimental effect on the marine environment but it nonetheless identifies environmental benefits that should accrue if sewage discharges were treated. On costs the report shows a wide range depending on the degree of treatment provided. The central option of secondary treatment for discharges to estuarial waters, and primary treatment for discharges to coastal waters has associated capital costs estimated at around £1·5 billion, and an associated increase in running costs of around £45 million per annum.

A key recommendation in the report is that a decision on future policy should be taken as soon as possible in order to maximise the return on the £1·4 billion investments already planned over the next 10 years to improve the quality of bathing waters.

The Government have considered the results of this study, and the views of other interested parties as summarised in the CES report. We have concluded that on the evidence provided a case can be made out for treating all substantial discharges of sewage. We have accordingly decided that in general municipal sewage should receive secondary treatment, but that primary treatment would be more appropriate for discharges to coastal waters, where it can be shown that this does not adversely affect the environment. The estimated cost of introducing this level of treatment is around £1·5 billion.

We intend that this new investment programme should be fully integrated with the programme to improve bathing waters and that it should be completed as soon as practicable. Discussions will be held with the National Rivers Authority, the Office of Water Services, and the sewerage undertakers to work out the detailed arrangements for implementing this policy.

Copies of the CES report are being placed in the Library.

Duchy of Lancaster

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of providing a secure car service for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the past 12 months.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* The cost of providing a secure car service for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the past 12 months was £34,404.

Waste Recycling

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to provide additional resources to assist local authorities to carry out waste paper collection and recycling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* No, it would be wrong to subsidise the collection and recycling of waste in this way. The collection and recycling of waste paper is a part of a comprehensive approach to recycling which local authorities are being encouraged to adopt under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Bill, currently before Parliament.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department now collects information on the number of local authorities which separate their domestic waste into different categories for recycling purposes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* I announced on 20 February during Standing Committee H consideration of clause 40 of the Environmental Protection Bill that my Department is sending out to local authorities a comprehensive questionnaire on recycling which will seek, among other things, information about the number of authorities which separate their domestic waste into different categories for recycling purposes.

Empty Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the annual management and maintenance costs of empty residential properties belonging to his Department by region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The costs of annual management and maintenance of empty residential properties are not separately identified and could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Shire Counties (Grants)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total Government grant per head of population for each shire county for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* Revenue support grant will not be paid directly to shire counties in 1990-91. The table shows the average revenue support grant after transitional adjustments plus special grant for low rateable value areas, per adult, to be paid to district councils in the area of each shire county.

Each area will receive £292·51 per adult in business rate income. The Government will also pay specific grants to authorities in the area of each shire county, but I have no estimates of the amounts.

Shire counties	*(£/adult)*
Avon	163
Bedfordshire	185
Berkshire	156
Buckinghamshire	143
Cambridgeshire	156
Cheshire	164
Cleveland	381
Cornwall	191
Cumbria	236
Derbyshire	186
Devon	167
Dorset	75
Durham	261
East Sussex	97
Essex	124
Gloucestershire	135
Hampshire	130
Hereford and Worcester	117
Hertfordshire	126
Humberside	302
Isle of Wight	151
Kent	177
Lancashire	273
Leicestershire	235
Lincolnshire	176
Norfolk	129
Northamptonshire	213
Northumberland	240
North Yorkshire	166
Nottinghamshire	212
Oxfordshire	86
Shropshire	204
Somerset	149
Staffordshire	151
Suffolk	137
Surrey	60
Warwickshire	108
West Sussex	72
Wiltshire	151

Housing Allocations (Marriage Breakdowns)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of local authority-owned flats and houses during each of the last five years have been allocated to those whose marriages have broken down.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* My Department has no information year by year on the proportion of new lettings by local authorities that are to people whose marriages have broken down. Survey evidence suggests that in the mid-1980s the number of new lettings by local authorities to successor households formed through divorce was about 40,000 a year in England, compared with about 240,000 new lettings a year in total.

Housing Scheme (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the bond made between the Merseyside development corporation and the developers of the housing schemes at Riverside drive, Liverpool, and the reasons for the non-completion of building work.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* No bond was made between the Merseyside development corporation and the housing developers. All the houses have been completed but I understand that certain additional works to the estate have not been finished because the developers are now in voluntary liquidation.

House of Commons (Repairs)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cash-limited amount for minor repairs at the House of Commons in 1989-90.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* Minor maintenance work is charged to class XX, vote 18, subhead G (Maintenance and other operating costs) for which the provision in 1989-90, following the supplementary estimate, is £6,003,000.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Deportation Orders

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been served with the notice of the intention to make deportation orders against them in the past 12 months; and how many of these were of Irish origin.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During 1989, 3,196 notices of intention to deport were issued, of which four were to citizens of the Republic of Ireland.

Passports

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department following the review of the telephone systems within the passport department, what percentage of responses to callers are made within two minutes of connection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are currently undertaking a survey of telephone traffic into all passport offices, in consultation with British Telecom. An analysis of the results of the survey will be made later this year.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* new passports, and *(b)* amendments to passports were received each month in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information, which relates to passports issued rather than to applications received, is shown in the table.

Monthly totals of (a) new passports issued and (b) endorsements and amendments to existing passports each month in 1989.

	(a)	*(b)*
January	164,820	25,213
February	243,344	33,286
March	247,260	36,248
April	234,833	35,559
May	235,177	40,011
June	198,793	37,299
July	243,356	44,473
August	233,547	44,245
September	170,547	28,821
October	150,805	28,684
November	163,591	26,140
December	106,189	14,724
Total for year	2,392,262	394,703

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were employed on a casual basis, that is, not on the permanent staff, at each passport office in each month of 1989; and what was the cost of such staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the number of casual staff in post at each regional office on the last day of each month in 1989, and the annual cost of such staff.

	London	*Liverpool*	*Peterborough*	*Newport*	*Glasgow*	*Belfast*	*Total*
1989							
January	49·5	40	63	35	5	1	193·5
February	54	72	84	65	22	2	299
March	48	82	79	70	38	6	323
April	50·5	95	91	70	50	4	360·5
May	56	103	90	86	52	7	404
June	60·5	91	82	73	54	14	374·5
July	59	75	75	75	50	16	350
August	59·9	53	61	52	42	8	275·5
September	23·5	50	46	33	8	4	164·5
October	13	3	17	3	7	1	44
November	—	2	16	2	7	1	28
December	—	1	4	2	7	1	15

Salary cost of casual staff in 1989: £1,605,933.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff not employed as permanent members of staff have worked for a continuous period of *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months and *(c)* nine months or more in 1989, showing the information for each passport office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the number of casual staff employed continuously at each regional passport office during 1989 for *(a)* three months or more, *(b)* six months or more and *(c)* nine months or more.

	(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*
London	20	28	16
Liverpool	42	45	2
Peterborough	32	31	33
Newport	43	28	10
Glasgow	13	35	4
Belfast	20	2	Nil

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many telephone lines are available for calls from the public at each passport office in 1990; how many were available in 1989; how many staff are currently allocated to answer such calls; and how many were available to do so during June to October 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the number of telephone lines available for incoming calls from the public at each passport office in *(a)* January 1989 and *(b)* January 1990.

	(a)	*(b)*
London	28	28
Liverpool	24	62
Peterborough	24	37
Newport	40	40
Glasgow	12	30
Belfast	3	8

Automatic answering facilities which connect callers initially to recorded information of general interest to passport applicants have been extended to all passport offices. Staff are allocated to telephone inquiry duties

according to the overall operational needs of each office, taking into account other demands, in particular that of passport issuing. No precise information is available as to the number of staff available to answer incoming calls during a particular period.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors' passports were issued in 1988 and 1989; and how many extensions to passports were issued in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 2,134,209 British visitor's passports were issued in 1988. Final figures for 1989 issues are not yet available.

During 1989, a total of 39,218 passports submitted for replacement were extended for two years free of charge, under special arrangements introduced to reduce delays.

Information for 1988 is available only in respect of the London passport office, where 18,511 such extensions were issued.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to increase the number of regional passport offices, and the size of the present regional offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Belfast passport office is being further expanded to take on additional work from other offices. The optimum size, number and location of passport offices in the United Kingdom are kept under regular review.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider a further national public compaign run over several months to encourage people to apply for new passports in the months from January to June and November and December to level out demand.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The peak period of demand for passports runs from February to August, and it would not be appropriate to encourage further applications during this period. The Passport Department's publicity, which included the distribution last autumn of 1 million leaflets through the travel trade, is directed towards encouraging applicants to apply during the months of November and December, when demand is at its lightest. We shall be considering a further publicity drive later in the year.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the date of receipt of applications for new passports being dealt with on the first day in each month in 1989 at each passport office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the available information as to the date of receipt of applications for new passports being dealt with by each regional passport office at the first weekend of each month in 1989.

Date of Receipt

	London	*Liverpool*	*Peterborough*	*Newport*	*Glasgow*	*Belfast*
1989						
January	7 December 1988	15 December 1988	16 December 1988	21 December 1988	[1]	30 December 1988
February	19 January	18 January	23 January	18 January	19 January	3 February
March	8 February	26 January	8 February	2 February	[1]	3 March
April	13 March	8 February	27 February	20 February	20 February	31 March
May	11 April	10 February	22 March	10 March	2 March	5 May
June	21 April	13 February	6 April	29 March	23 March	31 May
July	10 May	18 February	13 April	25 April	6 April	30 June
August	21 June	1 March	21 April	5 June	11 May	3 August
September	10 August	2 May	20 July	3 August	26 June	1 September
October	8 September	6 September	15 September	25 September	18 August	29 September
November	16 October	17 October	18 October	31 October	20 October	3 November
December	23 November	28 November	22 November	29 November	17 November	1 December

[1] Information not available.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs were incurred in refunding applicants who obtained visitors' passports due to the delay in obtaining a 10-year passport; and what percentage of these refunds had been paid to applicants who had acknowledgement that they would receiving same.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Refunds totalling £160,716 were authorised during 1989. An acknowledgement would normally be sent before payment.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimate he has made for the likely staff costs for the passport department in the financial years *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92; and what proportion of each of these budgets will be allocated for (i) permanent staff, (ii) casual staff and (iii) overtime;

(2) what was the total budget for salaries and overtime in passport offices in 1989-90; what is the estimated expenditure; and what is the estimated expenditure for 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The salaries and overtime element of the Passport Department's budget for running costs in 1989-90 amounted to £10·12 million. This is likely to be considerably exceeded due to the heavy demand for passport services during the year, but it is not yet possible to say precisely what the outturn expenditure will be. Budget estimates for 1990-91 and 1991-92 have yet to be finally determined.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated amount of overtime expected to be worked in each passport office in 1990; and what is the estimated cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The requirements for overtime working are determined by operational needs, which are in turn determined by the level and pattern of demand for passport services. Budget estimates for 1990-91 have yet to be finally determined.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated time expected to

be taken between receipt by application and issue of *(a)* new passports, *(b)* renewals and *(c)* amendments to passports at each office in 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The passport department will be aiming in 1990 to process straightforward, non-urgent passport applications of all types within a maximum of 30 working days during the period between January and June, and within 20 working days at other times. Urgent cases will receive priority and should not normally be subject to delay.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures have been taken so far to meet projected rises in demand for passports during 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An additional 220 permanent staff have been recruited to meet the expected increase in demand for passports this year. Twenty-two of these additional staff are being employed in Belfast and it is planned that a further increase in the Belfast staff should be made when additional accommodation becomes available in April or May. Improvements have been made in the telephone systems to enable a better service to be given to customers making inquiries by telephone. Greater use is being made of arrangements to transfer applications between offices, to balance workloads and to improve average processing times. The computer systems in the Glasgow and Liverpool offices have been enhanced to cater for the increases in staff numbers and pilot schemes have been established at both offices to test alternative working methods recommended following a review by consultants. Computerisation of the offices in Belfast, London, Newport and Peterborough has been deferred pending evaluation of the results of these pilot schemes.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time taken to process applications for new passports at each office from time of receipt to date of issue as at the first day of each month in 1989; and what was the average time taken to process applications for *(a)* renewal and *(b)* amendments to passports at each office from time of receipt to date of issue on the first day of each month in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in precisely the form requested. The processing times in working days for straightforward non-urgent applications of all types are shown in the table and relate to applications completed on the dates shown.

	London	*Liverpool*	*Peterborough*	*Newport*	*Glasgow*	*Belfast*
January	19	9	11	5	[1]	2
February	13	21	13	17	14	3
March	20	28	21	23·5	[1]	4
April	18	40	24	28	28	4
May	20	59	33	40	47	4
June	30	77	42	46	52	7
July	37	97	56	48	59	3
August	36	110	76	45·5	61	3
September	16	88	35	21·5	48	3
October	13	19	12	7	30	3
November	15	15	14	4·5	11	3
December	9	7	10	3·5	11	3

[1] Information Not Available
Note: Figures are those at the first weekend of each month in 1989

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of staff *(a)* in post and *(b)* actually on duty on the first day of each month in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows *(a)* the number of staff in post and *(b)* on duty at each regional passport office on the first working day of each month on 1989.

	London		*Liverpool*		*Peterborough*		*Newport*		*Glasgow*		*Belfast*	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
January	278·5	271·5	198·5	140·5	184	139	201	161	135·5	102·5	12	9
February	282	268	228·5	196·5	224·5	194·5	232	212	154·5	137	13	9
March	275	260	263·5	222	246·5	200·5	235·5	199·5	177·5	155	17	16
April	278	260	273	206	240·5	217	235·5	187·5	192·5	163·5	21	17
May	284·5	268·5	284	225·5	258·5	228·5	251	218	208·5	172	19	15
June	278·5	270	293	158·5	254·5	210	235	199	216·5	185	21·5	21·5
July	276	269	290	235	247·5	187	237	194	216·5	171·5	29·5	26·5
August	276·5	261·5	278	215·5	240	195·5	219	170	211·5	161·5	31·5	22·5
September	239·5	228·5	271	203·5	222·5	170·5	210	165	212·5	152	30	23
October	226	221	265·5	197·5	231·5	199·5	201	178	202·5	169	27	26
November	208	192	251·5	171·5	217·5	194·5	205	172	210	175	40	38
December	204	192	253·5	171·5	216·5	181·5	207	181	210	140	44·5	39·5

Column (a) numbers of staff in post.
Column (b) number of staff on duty.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate *(a)* the number of hours' overtime, *(b)* the average number of hours' overtime, and *(c)* the cost of such overtime to each passport office in each month in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the monthly number of hours overtime worked at each regional passport office and the estimated cost of such overtime in 1989.

		London	Liverpool	Peterborough	Newport	Glasgow	Belfast
January	Hours	3,877	4,383	4,251	4,387	1,935	—
	£	35,035	39,607	38,414	39,643	17,486	—
February	Hours	4,212	9,354	4,036	5,180	4,302	—
	£	38,062	84,528	36,472	46,809	38,875	—
March	Hours	5,779	14,591	7,455	6,415	4,369	—
	£	52,222	131872	67,368	57,970	39,481	—
April	Hours	4,654	7,821	5,617	5,334	6,296	378
	£	42,056	70,657	50,758	48,201	56,894	3,416
May	Hours	4,692	8,209	8,321	3,778	4,720	971
	£	42,400	74,181	75,193	34,140	42,653	8,774
June	Hours	2,806	5,223	4,019	3,019	4,841	822
	£	25,357	47,198	36,318	27,281	43,746	7,428
July	Hours	4,747	6,330	4,205	4,292	5,969	1,373
	£	42,897	57,201	37,999	38,785	53,939	12,407
August	Hours	4,886	6,297	4,173	4,013	3,140	528
	£	44,153	56,903	37,710	36,284	28,375	4,771
September	Hours	3,125	2,555	3,550	3,212	2,991	856
	£	28,239	23,088	32,080	29,025	27,028	7,735
October	Hours	—	3,048	256	—	2,825	753
	£	—	27,543	2,313	—	25,528	6,805
November	Hours	692	433	434	—	805	443
	£	6,253	3,913	3,922	—	7,274	4,003
December	Hours	504	—	82	—	75	—
	£	4,554	—	741	—	678	—

Rape

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men received sentences for rape of five years and over in each of the last 15 years; how many received sentences of under five years; and how many received non-custodial sentences in the same period;

(2) how many rapes were reported in each of the last 15 years; and how many resulted in *(a)* a charge, *(b)* a prosecution and *(c)* a conviction;

(3) what was the average sentence for rape in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. John Patten: Data for 1989 will not be available until autumn 1990. Information for 1984 to 1988 is given in the table. To produce further information for each year from 1974 would involve disproportionate cost.

Table 1—Males sentenced for rape offences 1984 to 1988
England and Wales

Year	Total sentenced	Non-custodial	Immediate custody: Under 5 years	Immediate custody: Over 5 years	Immediate custody: Life	Average sentence length years
1984	257	10	170	70	7	3·7
1985	339	10	192	128	9	4·5
1986	329	7	123	187	12	5·5
1987	349	5	73	259	12	6·2
1988	413	22	176	205	10	6·2

Table 2—Notifiable offences [1] of rape and persons proceeded against and found guilty of rape 1984 to 1988
England and Wales

Year	Notifiable offences[1]	Proceeded against	Found guilty
1984	1,433	568	258
1985	1,842	728	342
1986	2,288	794	330
1987	2,471	902	349
1988	2,855	1,103	420

[1] Includes attempts and 'other' rape offences.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken on the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation that the question of consent should be reconsidered with the aim of reforming the law on rape to make it clear that the alleged rapist's assumptions about the complainant's consent should be reasonable.

Mr. John Patten: Section 1(2) of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976 provides that any jury considering a defence based on the accused's belief that the woman was consenting to intercourse should have regard to the presence of absence or reasonable grounds for such a belief. In addition, the courts have held that a man who was reckless as to whether the woman consented should also be held guilty.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what circulars he has issued on what dates, to police forces concerning the special needs of victims in relation to rape trauma syndrome.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Home Office circular 69/1986, issued on 1 October 1986, set out the special needs of rape victims, and emphasised the need for police to understand the different ways in which victims may react. This circular was issued in response to recommendations made by the National Women's Commission on rape trauma syndrome and other matters.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has issued any circulars on the under-reporting of rape and sexual assault to police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. However, guidance to the police seeks to encourage increased reporting by stress the need to provide improved facilities for the reception and examination of victims of rape and sexual assault and to deal with them in a sympathetic and understanding manner.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of

managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Waddington: All the Department's centrally run management courses include sessions on equal opportunities; detailed information on management training provided locally is not held centrally. The other information requested is not available.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report: "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom."

Mr. John Patten: The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents who wish to do so can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The issue is kept under review by the ministerial group on women's issues.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what child care provision for pre-school age children is provided for employees of his Department; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office plans to provide nursery places for pre-school age children of its staff in Croydon and Bootle shortly and is considering the possibility of making similar provision in London; holiday play-scheme places have already been made available for the children of staff in Croydon, Bootle and Westminster. Management have contributed funds and staff to these initiatives, but there will also be a charge for places.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Waddington: My Department has two equal opportunities officers: one for staff in the prison service who is a grade 6, and one for all other staff who is a grade 5.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Waddington: Recruitment advertising has been amended to carry a positive equal opportunities message and a recently issued booklet promoting managerial careers in the Department specifically addresses those returning to work after a break of any kind.

Arrangements have recently been made to ensure that staff on special leave, including those who are taking a career break, as well as those on maternity leave are eligible for consideration by promotion boards. Seniority requirements for eligibility for promotion have also been reduced and opportunities for part-time working, in management grades as well as at junior levels, are being significantly increased.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Waddington: The proportion of female civil servants in the Home Office in the grades for which information is requested is as follows:

Grade	*Per cent.*
7	16
6	6
5	18
4	25
3	9
2	0
1	0

Domestic Violence

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police units are trained especially for domestic violence in each police force in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on such units is not collected centrally. We understand that there are 33 units in the Metropolitan police specifically dedicated to dealing with domestic violence, eight in the West Yorkshire police and one in the Northumbria police. Officers in these units have received basic training, which provides some guidance on dealing with domestic violence, and there are also opportunities for officers to attend specialist courses or seminars.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reports were made to police in each force area of England and Wales of domestic violence in each of the past 15 years; and how many resulted in *(a)* a charge, *(b)* a prosecution and *(c)* a conviction.

Mr. John Patten: Information on notifiable offences of violence against the person is published annually in table 2.8 of "Criminal Statistics England and Wales". Regular information on domestic violence is not reported separately to this Department by police forces in England and Wales. However, detailed information on homicide is presented in chapter 4 of the above publication. Some incomplete information was published in "Criminal Statistics" in 1979 and 1980. In addition, results obtained from a special survey of violent crime recorded by the police and from the 1988 British crime survey were published in Home Office research bulletin No. 27. There is also some information in chapter 7 of "Domestic Violence" Home Office research study 107. Copies of all these publications are available in the Library. Information on prosecutions and convictions is not collected in sufficient detail to distinguish domestic violence.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what improvements have been made since 1985 in data collection on domestic violence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Data on domestic violence are not collated centrally. We are considering recommending to chief officers that where they do not already collect data on the incidence of domestic violence in their area, they should do so.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken in the last 12 months, following the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation that a circular be issued by his Department to give guidance and encouragement to chief constables to review training and procedures on the handling of cases of domestic violence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A circular was issued in October 1986 in response to the Women's National Commission's recommendations. During the past 12 months we have reviewed police procedures in relation to domestic violence, and we expect to issue a revised circular within the next few months.

Attacks on Women

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reports of physical attacks on women there have been in each of the last 25 years in England and Wales; and how many resulted in *(a)* a charge, *(b)* a prosecution and *(c)* a conviction.

Mr. John Patten: Information on notifiable offences of violence against the person is published annually in table 2.8 of "Criminal Statistics England and Wales". Regular information on the sex of victims of such offences is not reported separately to this Department by police forces in England and Wales. However, detailed information on homicide is presented in chapter 4 of that publication. In addition, results obtained from a special survey of violent crime recorded by the police and from the 1988 British crime survey were published in Home Office research bulletin No. 27. Information on prosecutions and convictions is not collected in sufficient detail to identify the sex of victims.

Women in Custody

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women are in custody for conviction of *(a)* non-violent crime and *(b)* violent crime; and what was the comparable figure in each of the past five years.

Mr. Meller: The readily available information relates to sentenced prisoners and is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales", table 1.8 of the latest volume for 1988, Cm. 825, a copy of which is in the Library. Provisional information for 1989 is given in the table.

Population[1] in prison service establishments of females under sentence on 30 June 1989: by offence group

Offence group	*Number[2]*
Violence against the person	220
Sexual offences[3]	20
Robbery	80
Other offences[4]	860
Not recorded	80
Fine defaulters	20
All offences	1,280

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Rounded estimates.
[3] Including rape.
[4] Burglary, theft, handling, fraud, forgery, drugs and other offences.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women, by nationality, are in custody awaiting deportation; and what was the comparable information in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 31 January 1990 nine women were detained under the Immigration Act 1971 pending removal under the deportation powers. On these, four were Nigerian, one Ghanaian, one Jamaican, one Moroccan, one Colombian and one French. Details for the corresponding date in the previous five years are:

1989—6 (one Filipino, four Nigerians and one Indian)
1988—5 (two Ghanaians, one Ugandan, one Nigerian, one citizen of Sierra Leone)
1987—3 (one Jamaican, one Ghanaian, one nationality doubtful)
1986—1 (Ghanaian)
1985—0.

These figures do not include women serving custodial sentences who are also the subject of deportation proceedings.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Waddington: Sexual harassment is under all circumstances unacceptable to the Department. All staff have been advised of the appropriate avenues for complaints of such behaviour and where complaints are substantiated disciplinary procedures apply. Eleven complaints have been reported to personnel management divisions in the last five years. The action taken has included warnings and reprimands and, in one case, a ban on promotion for one year. There is no central record of complaints dealt with locally.

Sentencing Guidelines

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what sentencing guidelines exist for women with dependent children; and when these were last revised.

Mr. John Patten: Sentencing is a matter for the courts. The Court of Appeal has made it clear that custody should be used only when a court considers it absolutely necessary. We are revising the handbook "The Sentence of the Court" and the new edition will refer specifically to women offenders with family responsibilities. The national standards for community service orders, which came into effect on 1 April 1989, asked probation areas to ensure that community service placements are available for women offenders, including those who are pregnant, and offenders with young children.

Women Police Officers

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has issued any circular to police forces in England and Wales on the role of women police officers in relation to crime involving women and children.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No circular has been issued relating specifically to that subject. However, circular 69/1986, issued in October 1986, sets out the response agreed between the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers to the recommendation made by the Women's National Commission on the role of women police officers.

Pin-ups

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all photographs of females in various stages of undress from all his departmental premises.

Mr. Waddington: All managers have been advised, and are reminded from time to time, to ensure that no material which is likely to be found sexually offensive is displayed in the workplace; and to deal promptly with any complaints.

Prisons

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons have specialist mother and baby units.

Mr. Mellor: Three prison establishments—Her Majesty's prison Holloway, Her Majesty's prison Askham Grange, and Her Majesty's prison and young offender institution, Styal—have mother and baby units. It is planned to build a further unit at Her Majesty's prison and young offender institution, New Hall in 1991-92.

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 40 sites considered in the north-west for prison sites are *(a)* adjacent to a hospital, *(b)* within two to three miles of an existing prison, *(c)* built-up areas, *(d)* opposed by the local authorities and *(e)* acceptable to the local authorities; and if he will list them.

Mr. Mellor: Most of the information is not readily available on an accurate basis as preliminary consideration indicated that the site was not suitable for our purpose and a detailed investigation was not made. Planning consents were refused by the local authority in respect of sites at Kirkham, Orrell Lane (Bootle) and Rochdale.

Child Abuse

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents in each of the past 10 years have been reported of physical or sexual abuse of a child by the child's blood father out of the total number of such incidents.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not collected centrally. Estimates of the numbers of children who were victims of certain violent or sexual offences in 1984 were published in table 2 of the Home Office statistical bulletin 29/86. Some results from an ad hoc survey of violent crime recorded by the police in 1985-87 and from the 1988 British crime survey were published in Home Office research bulletin No. 27. Information on criminal proceedings for offences involving violence against children in May 1988 was published in Home Office statistical bulletin 42/89. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Prostitution

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek to abolish the term common prostitute; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No. We believe that the present arrangements—that the police make a record when they caution a woman for soliciting, and that convictions under the Street Offences Act 1959 depend upon the woman having been cautioned on an earlier occasion—are satisfactory.

Litter

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and amount of each fine levied for offences involving litter in Wales since 1 January 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1989 will not be available until autumn 1990.

Number of persons fined in Wales under section 1(3) of the Litter Act 1983

Amount of fine	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Under £20 including	42	63	56	23
£20 and under £50	63	89	93	93
£50 and under £100	18	19	19	21
Over £100[1]	6	1	5	3
Total	129	172	173	140

[1] Maximum fine was £150 (in 1985 and 1987).

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will issue guidelines on the portrayal of women in respect of direct broadcasting by satellite.

Mr. Waddington: The regulation of television services, including satellite services, is a matter for the regulatory bodies established for this purpose by Parliament, not for the Government.

The service to be provided by British Satellite Broadcasting will be regulated by the IBA under the Broadcasting Act 1981. Other satellite services currently available direct to home are regulated by the Cable Authority under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, by virtue of the fact that they are also relayed by cable. Under clauses 38 to 40 of the Broadcasting Bill all satellite services originating in the United Kingdom will be licensed by the new Independent Television Commission.

Police Custody (Deaths)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of deaths in police custody in London for each year since 1980, the coroners' verdict on the cause of death and the result, if any, of police investigations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of deaths which occurred in police custody, or otherwise with the police, in London, and the associated inquest verdicts, are contained in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. An investigation is carried out by the Metropolitan police into all such deaths. However, I am advised that the results of those investigations are not recorded centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the British Coal pits that have had their output target figures adjusted; and if he will show in each case *(a)* the original tonnage figure and *(b)* the revised figure.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the potential for energy saving from the use of compact fluorescent bulbs.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Compared to normal tungsten bulbs compact flourescent lamps use only 20 to 25 per cent. as much electricity.

Gas Levy Act

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the working of the Gas Levy Act.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Gas Levy Act 1981 was amended in 1986 when British Gas plc succeeded the British Gas Corporation. It has recently come to light that these amendments, contained in the Gas Act 1986, did not achieve the precise results intended at the time the legislation was taken. The intention was to ensure that British Gas were treated for gas levy purposes as if they were the same person as the gas corporation. However, the detailed amendments in schedule 6 to the 1986 Act brought into account a number of categories of gas which were not previously subject to the levy because they had never been included in the gas corporation's contracts. The Government will take the opportunity of the 1990 Finance Bill to rectify the situation. In the meantime my Department will continue to collect the levy in line with the intentions of the 1986 amendments.

Offshore Installations (Women Employed)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on the employment of women on offshore oil and gas installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Skills shortages are being experienced in the offshore oil and gas sector, and, although women are employed on offshore oil and gas installations, I believe that there is scope for employing more. In consultation with the industry, I already have plans to build on their existing initiatives to promote this objective.

The Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay (Offshore Employment) Order 1987 applies the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report: "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Wakeham: My Department is aware of the recommendations made in the child care network report prepared for the Commission of the European Communities. It is participating in interdepartmental studies into the feasibility of providing child care facilities in London and the surrounding areas.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Wakeham: All the Department's staff management courses include training on equal opportunities for women. A total of 33 per cent. of staff at grade six level or above outside headquarters have received equal opportunities training.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department does not provide child care facilities, and has no current plans to do so.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Wakeham: Grade five.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department's selection criteria for recruitment and promotion are designed not to discriminate against mature students or women returning to work. Advertisements do not contain upper age limits, and do mention returning to work and the Department's

flexible approach to working hours, part-time working and special leave for career break purposes. Promotion board procedures include monitoring decisions at each stage for compliance with equal opportunities policies.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Wakeham: There are no women in grades one to four; at grade five, 14 per cent. are women, at grade six, 4 per cent. and at grade seven, 11 per cent.

Disconnections

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any information on how many one-parent families have had their electricity or gas supplies cut off for not paying their bills.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no information on the numbers of one-parent families that have had their gas or electricity supplies disconnected. However, the numbers of gas and electricity disconnections are now at the lowest levels since records were first kept.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken;

(2) whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department's policy is that sexual harassment at work is unacceptable, and is a disciplinary matter. The definition of sexual harassment includes the display of sexually offensive material in the office. Reminders about the Department's policy are circulated from time to time, and explain the procedure for complaints. There has been one formal complaint in the last five years, which resulted in a formal warning as to future conduct.

Domestic Appliances

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on his Department's policy on energy ratings on domestic appliances.

Mr. Peter Morrison: With encouragement from my Energy Efficiency Office, all major appliance manufacturers provide, on a voluntary basis, energy consumption data for major energy using appliances in their sales literature.

Women Mineworkers

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many women have applied to work underground in a mine under the provisions of the Employment Act 1989; and how many have been accepted.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

Montrose Platform

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what electrical works were carried out in module 9 and its associated switch room prior to the resumption of production on the Montrose platform on 14 February; whether that work was complete prior to production commencing; whether transit blanks were fitted in the tracks of the electrical cables; and whether the cable tracks in module 9 had been closed;

(2) what work permits were issued on 14 February in respect of electrical work in module 9 and switchroom of the Montrose platform; and what procedures were in force for co-ordinating all work permits;

(3) whether the differential pressure switch was commissioned in the module 9 switchroom at the time of a reported gas leak on the Montrose production platform, on 14 February;

(4) whether the differential pressure switch was overridden at any time on 14 February in the switchroom associated with module 9 on the Montrose production platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Module 9 was surveyed by the certifying authority some three weeks before 14 February. Following this survey power supplies to the heater were changed, work was undertaken on the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, and instrument cables were installed. This work was completed prior to 14 February. Transit blocks were fitted in the tracks of the electrical cables and were closed at the time of the survey. The certifying authority's survey found that the differential pressure switch required to be replaced. This had not been done by 14 February. The pressurised system for module 9 had however been commissioned. The differential pressure switch was not overridden at any time on 14 February.

No work permits were issued on Montrose on 14 February. All existing construction and hot work permits were withdrawn at 3.20 am on 14 February.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what requirements his Department or the appropriate certifying authority has made in respect of differential pressures in the switching rooms associated with the Montrose production platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The fourth edition of my Department's guidance notes on the design, construction and certification of offshore installations, to be published shortly, states that a minimum positive pressure differential of 50 pascals should be maintained in safe working areas adjacent to hazardous areas on offshore installations. The certifying authority for the Montrose platform has confirmed that the pressure differential in switching rooms adjacent to hazardous areas on the platform meets this requirement.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what standards of fireproofing apply in the case of the accommodation module on the Montrose production platform; and how these differ from his most recently issued guidance notes and existing regulations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Offshore Installations (Construction and Survey) Regulations 1974 require that every part of an installation shall be composed of materials which, so far as is consistent with its function, shall be

incombustible. The accommodation module on the Montrose Alpha installation includes materials which are not incombustible and the external boundaries of the module will not meet the hydrocarbon class of fire resistance recommended in the fourth edition of my Department's guidance notes on the design, construction and certification of offshore installations, to be published shortly. Arrangements are in hand for the accommodation module to be replaced by a new module which will meet these requirements. Pending completion of this work, my Department has required that additional safety measures are put in place.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he will take to ensure that working and operational practices on the Montrose platform are safe before he allows oil and gas production to be recommenced on the Montrose field and to start up on the Arbroath field.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My safety directorate will take whatever steps are necessary to satisfy itself that the required safety standards are achieved. In particular my inspectors have required the operator to institute an immediate programme of instructing all platform personnel on work permit procedures. As soon as this has been completed, an audit will be carried out to confirm that the procedures are being adhered to.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to launch a nationwide campaign encouraging energy conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. My Department is running a two-week campaign, starting on 12 March, targeted at decision takers in industry, commerce and the public sector. It will be comprised of a series of advertisements in national newspapers on the important role of energy efficiency and how it can save money as well as help to reduce the risk of climate change.

Coal Imports

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of all imports of coal by British Coal or any of its subsidiaries in the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

Contract Management Arrangements

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many contract energy management arrangements in the public sector known to the Energy Efficiency Office commenced *(a)* before and *(b)* after the 1987 relaxation of the Treasury ruling on such arrangements.

Mr. Wakeham: The report of the National Audit Office on energy efficiency published last summer (House of Commons paper No. 547) noted that three of the 10 contract energy management arrangements in the public sector known to the EEO commenced after the issue of new guidelines in 1987. The EEO is currently engaged in an exercise to review progress.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action has been taken in response to the energy technology support unit's assessment in January 1987 that research and development spending of £6·65 million over 10 years on new technology could ultimately produce energy savings of £350 million.

Mr. Wakeham: Expenditure on research and development forms only a small part of the total expenditure needed to produce energy savings from new technology. In April 1989 my Energy Efficiency Office replaced its research and development and demonstration programmes by the best practice programme of research, development, demonstration and dissemination. This aims to stimulate energy savings worth £500 million per year by the year 2000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements have been established for the central reporting and monitoring of energy efficiency improvements for the public sector as a whole.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 20 July 1989 at column *249*.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the annual value of energy savings, in absolute and percentage terms, achieved over the last five years by *(a)* the National Health Service, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* each Government Department.

Mr. Wakeham: This information is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated 1989-90 spending by the Energy Efficiency Office on research and development projects under the best practice programme; and what is the estimated number of projects which will have been assisted by the year end.

Mr. Wakeham: The estimated total spend in 1989-90 by my Energy Efficiency Office on research, development, demonstration and dissemination, including the new best practice programme, is some £9·5 million. The R and D element of the best practice programme is only just commencing; eight projects have been recommended for support so far. The bulk of the expenditure has been on technology transfer.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made by the Energy Efficiency Office in 1989-90 towards promoting energy efficiency in *(a)* Government estate, *(b)* the National Health Service and *(c)* the rest of the public sector.

Mr. Wakeham: Details of a campaign to promote energy efficiency within Government Departments were announced on 20 July 1989, and Ministers with special responsibility for departmental energy use have since met twice to take forward work towards the Government's aim of achieving savings rising to £45 million per annum (15 per cent. of the current total bill) over five years. My Energy Efficiency Office co-operates with the Audit Commission and Department of Health on work to promote energy efficiency in the NHS and local authority sectors.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest figures he has on the number of major energy-consuming sites and the percentage of total energy consumption by manufacturing industry for which these sites are responsible.

Mr. Wakeham: The information comes from the five-yearly purchase inquiries conducted with a sample of 10,000 United Kingdom manufacturing sites and establishments by the Business Statistics Office. Latest figures are from the 1984 survey. Data from the 1989 survey is not yet available. The 1984 sample was based on 7 per cent. of the total 136,000 estimated manufacturing establishments, but accounts for an estimated 81 per cent. of the total energy consumed in manufacturing industry. The survey indicated that there were 328 establishments with energy consumption in excess of 5 million therms per annum, representing 51 per cent. of the total energy purchased by manufacturing industry.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the Energy Efficiency Office's current target number of major energy-consuming sites with monitoring and targeting systems.

Mr. Wakeham: The EEO's target is for monitoring and targeting systems to be implemented at 1,000 major energy-consumer sites by the end of the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the number of major energy-consuming sites implementing monitoring and targeting systems under the Energy Efficiency Office's monitoring and targeting scheme.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest estimate is that 800 major energy-consuming sites are implementing monitoring and targeting systems.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will instruct the Energy Efficiency Office to develop a fully comprehensive and detailed database on major energy users in the industry and commerce sector.

Mr. Wakeham: My Energy Efficiency Office is at the moment considering establishing a comprehensive database of major energy users in industry, commerce and local government. Our regional energy efficiency officers already have a considerable amount of such data, as has our energy technology support unit.

Energy Managers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the total energy spend for each energy manager appointed in each Government Department.

Mr. Wakeham: The precise information is at present being collected as part of the Government's initiative to improve energy efficiency in the Government estate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy which Government Departments have appointed full-time energy managers.

Mr. Wakeham: All major Departments have now appointed departmental energy managers.

National Grid Interconnector

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated cost of uprating the national grid interconnector with Scotland.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the name of the company which did not take up the invitation to tender for the job of his special public relations and marketing adviser on electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: Valin Pollen International was invited to tender for the position of special marketing and public relations adviser to my Department, but declined to participate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the name of the company which did not take up the invitation to tender for the job of public relations and marketing adviser on electricity privatisation to his Department and the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakenham: Valin Pollen International was invited to tender for the position of joint marketing and public relations adviser to my Department and the elecricity supply industry, but declined to participate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the conventions set out in the Central Office of Information publication of 1981 on the role of Government information officers will apply to Lowe Bell and Dewe Rogerson in their respective roles as special public relations and marketing advisers to him and public relations and marketing advisers on electricity privatisation to his Department and the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: Government Departments commissioning public relations and marketing advisers comply with the conventions set out in the Cabinet paper entitled "Central Government Conventions on Publicity and Advertising" which is in the Libraries of both Houses.

Hinkley Point C Inquiry

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has yet received the report of the inspector of the Hinkley Point C inquiry; and when he intends to publish it.

Mr. Wakeham: I have yet to receive the inspector's report, the timing of which is a matter for him. I will wish to see and consider the report before deciding when to publish it.

Sizewell

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the sea defence provision protecting Sizewell power stations in Suffolk.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for Nuclear Electric.

CIVIL SERVICE

First Division Association

100. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met the representatives of the First Division Association to discuss obligations to the Crown in Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: This was one of the subjects discussed when the head of the Home Civil Service met the Civil Service unions on 7 February.

Equal Opportunities

101. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has received concerning the progress of the Civil Service's equal opportunities employment programme.

Mr. Luce: I have received some representations. The Civil Service has a range of policies to encourage equal opportunities in all areas.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what grade his office recommends as being appropriate for departmental equal opportunities officers.

Mr. Luce: Guidance on the appointment of departmental equal opportunity officers is set out in the programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity for women in the Civil Service, which was published by my Department in 1984. This guidance recommends that in larger Departments, the equal opportunity officer should be appointed at grade 5 or grade 6 level. In smaller Departments, the guidance recommends that the officer should not usually be more than two grades below that of the principal establishment officer and should not, normally, be below grade 7 level.

Trade Unions

104. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service unions; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met members of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants on 29 January to discuss physical security of Government establishments.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship

80. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much business sponsorship is attracted outside London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, 70 per cent. of awards have gone to arts groups based outside London.

87. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what business sponsorship has been attracted for innovative works in the last 12 months.

Mr. Luce: Under my business sponsorship incentive scheme awards have gone to a very wide range of art forms. Examples include Allied Lyons' sponsorship of the Grand Union Music Theatre for its series of educational and community workshops involving commissions from Third world black writers and CNC Systems' support of the Mikron Theatre Company's south Pennine tour of areas not within easy reach of theatre centres, including performances in clubs, pubs and museums.

88. **Mr. Cormack:** To ask the Minister for the Arts to what extent business sponsorship funds have been used to provide for the refurbishment of national museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: National museums and galleries which I sponsor have benefited substantially from the generosity of business and private sponsors. In an increasing number of cases this has been linked to incentive funding from the Government. Recent examples of sponsored refurbishment include the gallery of Chinese art sponsored by Mr. Tsui at the Victoria and Albert museum, the "Food for Thought" gallery sponsored by the Sainsbury Family Trust and other generous donors at the science museum and the rehang at the Tate gallery to which BP plc made a very substantial donation.

National Arts Companies

81. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the accumulated deficits of the national companies.

Mr. Luce: I am advised that the four national companies are projecting a combined deficit of around £8 million by the end of March. Next year they are each to receive an increase of 11 per cent. in their grant from the Arts Council.

Overseas Earnings

82. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what estimate he has made of the overseas earnings of the arts in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: Although figures for such earnings are not held centrally, the PSI has attempted to quantify the overseas earnings of the arts, broadly defined, at £4 billion in 1984.

Arts (North-west)

83. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on participation in the arts in the north-west.

Mr. Luce: I understand that in 1988-89 audience figures in the north-west Arts region (population 4·8 million) at arts venues—including theatres, galleries, concert halls, and small touring and community venues—were in the region of 4 million.

Touring

84. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how he intends to encourage further touring both inside and outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: Many performing companies already tour extensively throughout Britain, quite apart from the touring provided for by the Arts Council's annual touring budget, which will be £8·2 million in 1990-91. In addition

to this, I have given the Arts Council an extra £5·5 million over the three-year period from 1988-89 to 1990-91 to provide approximately 60 weeks extra touring in each year. Overseas touring is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, through the British Council.

Public Libraries

85. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the total of expenditure per capita on public libraries in England and Wales.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure per capita on public libraries in England, for which I am responsible, was £9·87 in 1988-89. Libraries in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

West Midlands Arts

86. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to meet the chairman of West Midlands Arts to discuss the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I discussed Mr. Wilding's report with the chairman of West Midlands Arts on 19 December 1989.

Wilding Report

89. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to respond to the Wilding report.

95. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when it is his intention to respond to the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Arts Council and Crafts Council

90. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last discussed with the chairman of the Arts Council and the Crafts Council the question of the merger of those two organisations.

Mr. Luce: I regularly meet the chairmen of the Arts Council and Crafts Council to discuss current issues.

East Midlands Arts

91. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to meet the chairman of East Midlands Arts to discuss the level of financial support for photography in the east midlands.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so. East Midlands Arts' direct support for photography this year was £53,000. In 1990-91 this will rise to £74,000.

Arts Council

92. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I last met the chairman on 19 February 1990. A variety of matters of mutual interest were discussed.

Northern Arts

93. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of Northern Arts to discuss the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I have already discussed Mr. Wilding's report with the chairman of Northern Arts on 19 December 1989.

Opera

94. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received concerning the funding of opera in England.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of such representations. It is however a matter for the Arts Council to determine how much of its grant is spent on opera. In 1990-91 I am advised that this will be over £22 million, including touring.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Luce: Specific training sessions about equality of opportunity for women, ethnic minorities and the disabled are included in all the internal residential management training courses undertaken by managers in my Department. Emphasis is also given to equality of opportunity when training managers to carry out staff appraisal, selection and promotion interviewing. The one female member of staff at grade 6 outside headquarters has not yet attended a course as specified.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Luce: My Department does not yet provide nursery facilities for the use of its staff, but they have access to a local holiday play scheme financed by parental and departmental contributions.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Luce: My Department is served by the Cabinet Office equal opportunities officer who is a grade seven.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career-break due to child care.

Mr. Luce: In my Department there are no age limits on recruitment although we expect recruits to give a reasonable period of service before retirement. Candidates without the usual academic qualifications may take a short answer test. Promotion is solely on the basis of merit. We have lowered our seniority requirements to bring them into line with the national standard and previous service counts for seniority purposes after a career break.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of grades seven, six, five, four, three, two and one, respectively.

Mr. Luce: In my Department the proportion of civil servants in each grade who are women, is as follows:

Grade 1—Not applicable
2—Nil
3—Not applicable
4—Not applicable
5—25 per cent.
6—100 per cent.
7—27 per cent.

Pin-ups

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups on all his departmental premises.

Mr. Luce: My Department has no plans to issue specific guidance on this subject. However, it has issued a policy statement about sexual harassment; offensive pin-ups would be dealt with in this context.

Merseyside Arts

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of Merseyside Arts to discuss the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 12 February at column *52*.

Access for the Disabled

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on progress made in achieving easier access for the disabled in arts venues and libraries.

Mr. Luce: In December 1988 I gave £150,000 to the ADAPT fund, set up by the Carnegie Trust to improve the accessibility of arts venues, including libraries, for disabled people. I am pleased to say that the fund has to date made 23 awards provisionally worth £167,250.

SCOTLAND

BR Sleeper Services

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to BR about the London-Stanraer overnight sleeper service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend was informed by British Rail of its plans to withdraw the Stranraer-London sleeper service from 14 May and to provide a connecting service between Stranraer and the Glasgow-London sleeper trains. While it is regrettable that British Rail has found it necessary to follow this course, the decision is a commercial matter for British Rail.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Rifkind: Four management training courses and eight non-management courses run by my Department's training unit include sessions on equal opportunities. Staff also attend management courses run by the Civil Service College which have equal opportunities input. Training opportunities are available to all my Department's staff irrespective of location. Detailed figures are not available for the limited number of staff at grade six level and above who do not work in headquarters offices.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department does not directly make child care provision. Staff of my Department do, however, make use during school holidays of the facilities provided for school age children of civil servants by the central Edinburgh holiday play scheme. The possibility of providing child care facilities in the Scottish Office in future is currently the subject of a cost-benefit study. The study will cover how any such facilities, if justified, might be funded.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Rifkind: Grade 5.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: The percentage of women officers in grades one to seven in the Scottish Office and associated departments is shown in the table.

Grade	*Number*
One	0
Two	0
Three	4·3
Four	0
Five	7·1
Six	15·3
Seven	12·3

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department's policy statement makes it clear that sexual harassment constitutes unacceptable behaviour which will not be tolerated. The policy statement, and guidance on reporting complaints, was brought to the attention of all staff by an office notice and is separately covered in the staff handbook. A leaflet to be issued to all new entrants is in course of preparation. Four formal complaints about sexual harassment have been made during the last five years. Disciplinary action was taken in three cases.

Well Women Clinics

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of well women clinics in each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not collected centrally.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he takes account of the Forestry Commission's duty under section 11 of the Countryside Act to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside in considering the degree of expertise in nature conservation possessed by potential appointees to the Commission.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: When selecting staff for employment, the Forestry Commission takes into account all qualifications and experience which are relevant to the job concerned. A degree of expertise in nature conservation would be relevant in employing field officers, many of whom have qualifications and experience in this area. In addition, the commission employs specialist staff on environmental duties, and retains consultants on nature conservation, landscape architecture and archaeology.

Rates Arrears

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the percentage of ratepayers in arrears, for each quarter of each of the last five years, to the end of March 1989, for each regional council area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Ravenscraig

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *271*, whether he discussed with the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1989 the decision to impose a production pause on Ravenscraig over the Christmas and new year holiday period.

Mr. Lang: The detailed matters discussed at my right hon. and learned Friend's meeting with the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1989 are commercially confidential.

Schools (Opting Out)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on funding from his Department's funds for organisations which seek to persuade schools to opt out of the local authority education system.

Mr. Lang: No public funds will be available to an organisation to persuade schools to seek self-governing status.

Training Agency

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why all men and women, whether married or unmarried, are required to be entered as married on Training Agency forms ET4, ET6, ET69 and ET67.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* Applicants for Employment Training are no longer required to provide the Training Agency with information about marital status. However, forms ET4, ET6, ET67 and ET69 are used to enter information on the Training Agency's computer which will accept the input only if all entries on the forms, including the redundant "marital status" entry, have been completed. To overcome this, a blanket entry of "married" on all these forms was agreed to be preferable to a costly interim software amendment to the computer system. The computer system is to be revised in April 1990 and charges will be introduced at that time to resolve this problem.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to the loss of bed spaces or the closure of wards or hospitals as a consequence of the deficit currently incurred by Lothian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend made clear that there will be no crisis closures. We are awaiting Lothian health board's proposals for considered adjustments to achieve more efficient arrangements for service delivery. Any adjustments will be within the framework of the board's strategic plans and made in the normal way so that the interests of patients remain paramount.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Ryder: All management training courses run by my Department include sessions on equal opportunities and it is Treasury policy that staff with management responsibilities, including those outside headquarters, receive appropriate training.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Ryder: Children of staff in Her Majesty's Treasury between the ages of five and 12 have access to a holiday play scheme that is organised by the Westminster Play Association. The scheme is run in the Treasury building and is available to a number of Whitehall Departments.

Consideration is being given to other child care schemes for which funding arrangements would need to be contained within overall running cost provision.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Ryder: Grade seven.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career-break due to child care.

Mr. Ryder: As an equal opportunities employer, mature students and women who return to work are treated in exactly the same way as anyone else within the Treasury's recruitment and promotion policy.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Ryder: For Her Majesty's Treasury the information is as follows:

(a) 17·4 per cent.;
(b) 5·9 per cent.;
(c) 12·8 per cent.;
(d) none;
(e) 18·5 per cent.;
(f) none;
(g) none.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Ryder: The report was prepared for the European Commission, which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, have encouraged the development of a range of high quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Ryder: The Civil Service policy on sexual harassment is set out in the programme for action to achieve equal opportunities for women in the Civil Service, which was published by the Cabinet Office (management and personnel office) in 1984. Sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and is dealt with, if appropriate, as a disciplinary matter through the usual Civil Service complaints procedure. Specific guidance on reporting alleged sexual harassment is included in "Women in the Treasury: a Guide to Personnel Management policies", which has been issued to all Treasury staff. Existing guidance in Her Majesty' Treasury on sexual harassment is being reviewed with a view to incorporating it in a new booklet on equal opportunity policies. There have been five complaints reported in the past five to six years; in the three proven cases, formal written warnings were issued.

Taxation

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of women he expects the proposed married person's tax allowance will be given to.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that in 1990-91 approximately 400,000 married women, just under 10 per cent. of all married women with income greater than the personal allowance, will receive part or all of the married couple's allowance. The estimate is based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and is provisional.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the financial position of farmers' wives in relation to taxation, social security benefits and pensions.

Mr. Lilley: I am not aware of any particular points affecting the financial position of farmers' wives. Many of them will be among the 2¾ million wives who will gain when the new system of independent taxation comes into effect on 5 April this year.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will seek to zero-rate sanitary products for value added tax purposes; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I cannot anticipate my right hon Friend's Budget statement.

Pin-ups

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Ryder: Sexual harassment at work, of which the display of sexually offensive material is a form, is not tolerated and is dealt with, if appropriate, as a disciplinary matter through the usual Civil Service complaints procedures. Existing guidance in Her Majesty's Treasury on sexual harassment is being reviewed with a view to incorporating it in a new booklet on equal opportunities.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether payments other than those paid to persons who have been randomly selected by the electronic random number indicator equipment situated at Lytham St. Annes have been made by ERNIE in any year since 1979.

Mr. Ryder: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement about the dumping of sewage sludge at sea.

Mr. Gummer: The arrangements reached at the 1987 North sea ministerial conference included an undertaking in principle not to dump materials in the North sea unless there are no practical disposal alternatives on land. In the case of sewage sludge more than 70 per cent. of the United Kingdom's production of this material is now disposed of on land. The Government have continued to encourage sewerage undertakers to develop the use of practical land-based disposal methods for the remainder. In particular, we have identified significant advances in incineration techniques both as regard their efficiency and environmental impact.

In view of this encouraging progress in the development of alternative methods, we have now decided to terminate the sea disposal of sewage sludge. This will mean a substantial programme of work to be undertaken in order to implement alternative disposal methods. A major capital investment will be required. Planning permission where necessary must also be obtained. We shall proceed as rapidly as possible. But some dumping will need to continue until new facilities are ready. We intend to have finished all dumping by the end of 1998.

Chemical Wastes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the incineration of chemical wastes at sea.

Mr. Gummer: At the 1987 North sea ministerial conference it was agreed that marine incineration should be phased out by 31 December 1994 as alternative means of dealing with the wastes concerned were becoming available. Land-based incineration facilities capable of dealing with the United Kingdom wastes which are currently burnt at sea are now being developed. I have therefore decided that no more United Kingdom waste will be licensed for marine incineration after the end of this year.

Industrial Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to reduce to zero by the year 2000 inputs of toxic discharges into the North sea.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

It is the Government's policy to prevent or (where prevention is not possible) minimise releases of toxic substances to the aquatic environment. Our current target reductions are of the order of 50 per cent. by 1995. They were agreed at the London North sea conference in 1987. The United Kingdom national action plan published on 5 March shows the good progress we have made to date. The progress made by each North sea state will be reviewed at the Hague North sea conference this week.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of Agricultural Development Advisory Service staff are women.

Mr. Curry: The proportion of women in the Ministry's Agricultural Development Advisory Service is currently 31 per cent.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to encourage women to use his Department's sponsored training courses.

Mr. Curry: All courses provided by my Department are fully publicised to women staff; we also run specific courses for women managers to help them develop their personal effectiveness. Additionally, to encourage women with young families, any extra child care expenses incurred as a result of attending a training course, may be reclaimed.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Curry: All initial and middle management training courses run by my Department include sessions on equal opportunities for women. Training for staff at grade six level and above is more individually structured and staff are encouraged to undertake training in a range of competencies, including equal opportunities for women, but separate statistics are not available.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what childcare provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 31 January (*Official Report*, column *236*). Once the results of the studies mentioned are available, consideration will be given to the matter of funding. School holiday play schemes for children aged over five years have been operating at Guildford since 1988 and at Leeds since last year, the latter scheme being run in partnership with the DSS and PSA. A further scheme will be introduced at the central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge, this summer. Discussions are currently in progress on the possibility of introducing a play scheme at Tolworth, in co-operation with other Government Departments in the area. Pump-priming funds have been available and continue to be available for such schemes.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Curry: Grade five.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Curry: The percentage of women in the following grades and grade equivalents as at 28 February 1990 is as follows:

Women as percentage of total staff in grade

Grade	*Per cent.*
7	12
6	9
5	8
4	—
3	8
2	—
1	—

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Curry: The report was prepared for the European Commission, which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, have encouraged the development of a range of high quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career-break due to child care.

Mr. Curry: The Department is directly responsible for the recruitment of staff up to and including administrative officer and equivalent grades and the departmental grade of fishery officer. Selection panels are instructed on the need to guard against any form of discrimination. Selection criteria based, for example, on sex, are strictly forbidden as are criteria which might discriminate on age grounds against mature students or women returning to work after a career break. Age limits and qualification requirements for departmental grades which are recruited by the Civil Service Commission on our behalf are currently under review with the aim of ensuring that no unnecessary restrictions are placed on eligibility to apply to work in the Department.

A domestic absence reinstatement scheme, designed to give staff who resign for domestic reasons preferential consideration for reinstatement and encouragement to rejoin my Department when they are ready to return to work, was introduced in October 1988. Formal arrangements governing part-time working and job sharing were introduced in December 1989. These are intended to promote and expand the opportunities available in the Department for those who wish to work reduced hours.

Those responsible for assessing staff for promotion are regularly reminded of the need to assess staff who work reduced hours on exactly the same basis as all other staff, without regard to their status as part-timers or job-sharers. Officers recommended for promotion, who take maternity leave before they are posted to a higher grade, may have the validity of their promotion recommendations extended, normally for up to one year, to cover their period of absence.

Proposed new arrangements for promotion are currently under discussion with the Department's trade union side. These will remove seniority, which may indirectly discriminate against those who take career breaks, from promotion procedures. They will also ensure that staff approaching retiring age remain eligible for consideration for promotion until they reach the normal retiring age of the higher grade. I hope these new arrangements will be in place by 1 January 1991.

The Department also monitors recruitment competitions, promotions and allocations to duties with the aim of ensuring that there is no discrimination against women.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy of sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Curry: The Civil Service policy on sexual harassment is set out in the programme of action to achieve equal opportunities for women in the Civil Service, which was published by the Cabinet Office (management and personnel office) in 1984. Sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and is dealt with as a disciplinary matter through the usual Civil Service complaints procedures. In my Department a network of sexual harassment contact officers has been set up and guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff.

Three formal complaints have been reported centrally to personnel division in the past five years; all were investigated and disciplinary action was taken as appropriate.

Pin-ups

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Curry: Guidance has already been issued in my Department which makes it clear that sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and in particular requires managers to ensure that potentially offensive material is not displayed in the workplace.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the new way in which grant aid for coastal protection will be calculated, and indicate the rate at which such grants will be paid.

Mr. Curry: It is our intention that the revised method of calculating grant rates for coast protection schemes will parallel the existing one as far as possible. The rates at which grant may be paid will be the same as those that obtain at present (that is, up to a maximum of 70 per cent.). Details of the new method of calculation will be circulated to the coast protection authorities as quickly as possible.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of rising sea levels, he will review the provisions and working of the Coast Protection Act 1949; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Coast Protection Act 1949 allows maritime district councils to carry out such work as is necessary. The requirement for work will vary from location to location and will depend on local as well as global factors. A rise in mean sea level will have no direct implication for the workings of the Act. Nevertheless, the latest developments on climate change are closely monitored and careful consideration is given to the likely consequences for both coast protection and sea defence.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research projects on coastal protection and sea defences are being funded by his Ministry; and at what percentage rate.

Mr. Curry: the Department is spending £1·4 million in 1989-90 on a national programme of research on coastal protection and sea defence and a list of the projects being funded is given in the table. The Department discusses its national research programme with the National Rivers Authority and other relevant bodies.

National programme of R and D on coastal defence and protection currently funded by MAFF

Research objective	*(a) Location*	*(b) Amount of MAFF funding in 1989-90 £'000*	*(c) MAFF funding as percentage of total cost*
1. To ensure that the Storm Tide Warning Service Operational Model is properly maintained, performance monitored, shortcomings identified and rectified and developed in line with modern technology	NERC's Institute of Oceanographic Services (IOS) at Merseyside or Wormley Laboratory	95	100
2. To develop numerical surge forecasting models for the south and west coasts of Britain for future extension of the Storm Tide Warning Service	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	88	100
3. To develop a single numerical modelling system embracing tides, surges and waves for predicting extreme sea states and for use as a forecasting tool	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	120	100
4. To improve tidal predictions and develop methods for predicting sea state extremes	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	154	100
5. To maintain and improve the quality, reliability and availability of sea level data obtained from the national tide gauge network	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	67	100
6. To assemble, analyse and maintain a bank of well documented and verified observations from the principal tide gauges round Great Britain	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	90	100
7. Studies of wave set-up and comparison with wave models	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	37	100
8. Parameterization of air/sea interaction processes	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	25	100
9. Effects on waves of climatic variations	IOS, Merseyside or Wormley	25	100
10. To carry out model tests on structures in order to assist in design and construction of effective and economical coastal defences	Hydraulics Research Laboratory (HRL), Wallingford	65	100
11. To develop models to provide engineering tools for predicting waves at or near the coastline	Hydraulics Research Laboratory (HRL), Wallingford	65	100
12. Sea wall design	Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA), London	7	100

	Research objective	(a) Location	(b) Amount of MAFF funding in 1989-90 £'000	(c) MAFF funding as percentage of total cost
13.	Assessment and integrated management of coastal cliff systems	University of Strathclyde, Glasgow	12	100
14.	Further macro review of the coast of England and Wales	HRL, Wallingford	4	100
15.	Rehabilitation and maintenance of old waterfront walls	CIRIA, London	15	30
16.	Modelling sediment transport in combined wave current flow	University College of North Wales, Bangor	29	100
17.	Sediment transport by combined waves and currents (phase II)	HRL, Wallingford	83	100
18.	Shingle Beach Dynamics 3D aspects	HRL, Wallingford	63	100
19.	Mathematical model of groynes on shingle beaches	HRL, Wallingford	32	100
20.	Performance of permable revetments	HRL, Wallingford	61	100
21.	Design of quarried rock slope protection against wave attack	CIRIA, London	15	20
22.	Process of sand transport by tidal currents and waves	NERC's Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, Birkenhead	9	100
23.	Climatic change—United Kingdom sea level trends	NERC's Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, Birkenhead	40	100
24.	A review and collation of beach data within the United Kingdom	HRL, Wallingford	7	100
25.	Mathematical modelling of wave climate near offshore breakwaters	HRL, Wallingford	10	100
26.	Development of environmental assessment manual: a pilot study	University of East Anglia, Norwich	14	100
29.	Agricultural benefits of coast protection and sea defence	Middlesex Polytechnic Flood Hazard Research Centre, Enfield	50	100
30.	Post project appraisal of urban flood protection	Middlesex Polytechnic Flood Hazard Research Centre, Enfield	25	100
		Total	1,400	

Veal Crates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek to persuade the Council of Ministers to ban the use of veal crates in the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: This is already the policy which we are pursuing in discussions on Commission proposals for minimum standards for the welfare of intensively kept calves.

Global Warming

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to put forward proposals at the next European Council of Agriculture Ministers, on 5 and 6 March in Brussels, on initiatives that may be taken in the agriculture sector to mitigate the global warming greenhouse effect.

Mr. Gummer: The Agriculture Council on 5-6 March will concentrate on the Commission's farm price proposals. I shall ensure that the issue of global warming is taken into account in the United Kingdom's position in so far as it relates to matters on the Council agenda.

Live Animal Stock (Exports)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigations are carried out by his Department to ensure that live animal stock exported from the United Kingdom receive the correct exercise and food while in transit in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Mr. Maclean: The Department administers arrangements for resting, feeding and watering and inspecting farm animals prior to export from Great Britain for fattening or immediate slaughter. We seek assurances about the onward journey from exporters and their importers although other member states are responsible for applying EC measures on their territories. Enforcement of statutory controls covering welfare during journeys in this country is a matter for local authorities.

In addition, we have launched an initiative in the EC on animal welfare in which we have underlined the need for proper standards during transport.

Flood Damage

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what help he will give to restore the damaged sea wall and to prevent further flood damage *(a)* along the north Devon coast and *(b)* to the towns of Ilfracombe and Lynmouth.

Mr. Curry: Apart from Ilfracombe and Lynmouth, we are aware of only minor damage to sea defence along the north Devon coast.

At Lynmouth the county council, as highway authority, is taking responsibility for the damage to the works protecting the coastal road. At Ilfracombe temporary works to repair the damage to a section of the sea wall are already in place, and the National Rivers Authority south-west region is designing a scheme to provide a permanent defence. We understand that the North Devon district council is currently dealing with another flooding problem in the town. Grant is available (at rates up to 70 per cent.) on works which are economically, technically and environmentally acceptable.

National Rivers Authority and local authority programmes of flood defence works may change as a result of recent storm events, so we have asked authorities for an early indication of these changes in order to assess the future work and funding implications. It is our intention to ensure that Government funding is sufficient to support a programme which takes full account of these needs.

Aphids

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the proposals put to his Department by the Agriculture and Food Research Council Institute at Rorthamsted on aphid research and aphid surveys.

Mr. Curry: A number of proposals have been put to my Department on aphid research and surveys. The importance of aphids as crop pests is fully appreciated but all research proposals have to be judged not only on their individual merits but according to the priority of Ministry requirements. The chief scientist has now given approval in principle for the funding of one proposal on aphid surveys linked to studies of climate change.

Cricket Bat Willows

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidance his Department issues on pollarding or copsing cricket bat willows.

Mr. Curry: Guidance on growing cricket bat willows is given in Forestry Commission bulletin 17, "The Cultivation of the Cricket Bat Willow". This bulletin is out of print, but I am arranging for a photocopy to be placed in the Library of the House. Photocopies can also be bought from the Forestry Commission's library at Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH.

Inshore Fishing

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the question of the United Kingdom inshore fishing fleet.

Mr. Curry: The Minister and I are in regular contact with fisheries organisations about a wide range of issues affecting the inshore fleet.

EC Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent meetings he has had with other European Economic Community Agriculture Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Minister and I meet other European Community Agriculture Ministers frequently, both at meetings of the Council of Ministers and elsewhere.

EC Food Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the amount of food exported by the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe; and what was the cost of the export rebates involved over the past 12 months.

Mr. Curry: For the main agricultural commodities, the table shows the most recent data available on the volume of exports. The cost of the export refunds involved could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Volume of EC Exports, January-August 1989 (000 tonnes)

	To USSR	*To Eastern Europe*[1]
Wheat	2,980	1,085
Barley	1,997	1,096
Wheat flour	[2]	5
Rice	[2]	2
Malt	61	1
Whole milk powder	31	.1
Skimmed milk powder	[2]	[2]
Condensed milk	0	[2]
Butter (incl. butter oil)	118	14
Beef and veal	72	105
Pigmeat	[2]	[2]
Poultrymeat	[2]	[2]
Sugar total (white equivalent)	91	213
(of which refined sugar)	(91)	(213)
Olive Oil	2	[2]

Notes: [1] German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslavakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.
[2] denotes trade under 500 tonnes.

Poultry

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the percentage value of the poultry siezed for slaughter under the Zoonoses Order 1989, paid as compensation to the poultry's owner.

Mr. Maclean: When a poultry flock in which the presence of salmonella has been confirmed is compulsorily slaughtered, compensation is paid in accordance with the requirements of the Animal Health Act 1981. The amount paid is based on the scale of values depending on the age of the birds and represents 60 per cent. of the value of a healthy flock.

Fisheries Research

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* vessels based in Great Britain which are engaged in fisheries research, *(b)* the draught and tonnage of the vessels, *(c)* the type of fish covered by the research, *(d)* the number of full-time crew employed on each vessel, *(e)* the number of scientists employed in each vessel, *(f)* the number of other staff employed on the vessel, *(g)* the number of staff employed at the shore establishment and which directly support each vessel, *(h)* the port at which the vessel is based, *(i)* the sea area which is normally covered by each vessel and its extent in square miles, *(j)* the number of days spent at sea in each of the last three years and *(k)* the costs attributed to the work of each vessel in those three years or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* Two vessels, RV Cirolana and RV Corystes, are operated by my Department for fisheries research. RV Corystes entered service in April 1988.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Natural Environment Research Council also operate fisheries reseach vessels.

Information about the vessels operated by the Ministry is as follows:

Draught and tonnage

(i) Cirolana	
Draft	[1]5·11m
Net registered tonnage	440·81
Gross registered tonnage	1,731·48
(ii) Corystes	
Draft	[1]4·30m
Net registered tonnage	384·00
Gross registered tonnage	1,280·00

[1] Mean.

Type of fish covered by the research

All fish and shellfish in principle, but particularly the 40 or so species of interest to the United Kingdom's commercial fishermen and subject to EC common fishery policy regulations on total allowable catches. A total of 50 per cent. of the vessels' time is engaged in marine environmental protection-related work.

Full-time crew employed

	Number
(i) Cirolana	29
(ii) Corystes	19
(iii) Relief	6

Scientific staff

Those staff are shore-based. The number of scientists normally carried per cruise is:

	Number
(i) Cirolana	10
(ii) Corystes	6

Other staff employed on the vessels

Nil.

Shore based support staff

Five and half.

Base port

Lowestoft.

Operational sea area

(i) *Cirolana*

Worldwide capability but operated mainly in the North Atlantic from the Azores to the polar ice shelf and Europe/Scandinavia to Canada. Approximate area 4·4 million square miles.

(ii) *Corystes*

North-west European shelf sea contiguous with the British Isles, although capable of working anywhere in the Atlantic in reasonable weather conditions. Approximate area 1 million square miles.

Number of days spent at sea

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
(i) Cirolana	256	243	254
(ii) Corystes	—	183	249

(k) Operational cost of vessels (to nearest £ thousand)

	1987-88 (£)	*1988-89* (£)	*1989-90*[1] (£)
(i) Cirolana	921,000	986,000	1,039,000
(ii) Corystes	—	586,000	705,000

[1] Forecast.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will now increase the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals, so as to enable them to deal with claims for breaches of contracts of employment following dismissal.

Mr. Nicholls: We consulted widely on this issue last year. This showed overwhelming support for implementation. I have therefore decided that the necessary statutory instrument should be made as soon as practicable. This will mean that an employee making a complaint of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal will also be able to ask the tribunal to recover, for example, arrears of pay lost because he was dismissed without notice. At present separate proceedings have to be initiated in the civil courts to recover such damages.

I have also decided that both the conditions set out in section 131(3) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 should be required to be satisfied before an industrial tribunal can consider a claim. I am sure that the fact that it will be possible to settle simultaneously those contractual disputes between an employer and employee arising from dismissal will be welcomed by both sides.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will bring forward legislation to extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals to enable them to determine claims for breach of contract arising from dismissals from employment.

Mr. Nicholls: We consulted widely on this issue last year. This showed overwhelming support for implementation. I have, therefore, decided that the necessary statutory instrument should be made as soon as practicable. This means that an employee making a complaint of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal will also be able to ask the tribunal to recover, for example, arrears of pay lost because he was dismissed without notice. At present separate proceedings have to be initiated in civil courts to recover such damages.

I have also decided that both the conditions set out in section 131(3) of the Employment Protection

(Consolidation) Act 1978 should be required to be satisfied before an industrial tribunal can consider a claim. I am sure that the fact that it will be possible to settle simultaneously those contractual disputes between an employer and employee arising from dismissal will be welcomed by both sides.

Disabled People

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what account he is taking in his plans for training and enterprise councils of arrangements for training at residential and other specialist colleges for people with disabilities which are currently centrally funded by the Training Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The TECs will need to take full account of the need for residential and other specialist training provision for people with disabilities. It is important that TECs should have the responsibility for planning, delivering and accounting for all training for people under Training Agency programmes, including people with disabilities, through the full range of help available. They should be developing ways of delivering those pro grammes so that even people with quite severe disabilities can be trained for local jobs in an integrated setting. The TECs should be taking decisions on the funding and delivery of training with a clear appreciation of, and responsibility for, the cost effectiveness of different means at their disposal.

During 1990-91 and 1991-92 my Department will continue to fund centrally residential training for people with disabilities. Officials will work closely with the providers of training and TECs during that time to pilot possible ways in which TECs might become directly involved in decisions about the referral of suitable trainees and the funding of residential places. A decision on whether to devolve responsibility for referral and funding arrangements wholly to TECs would have to take full account of the need for continuity of provision in this important area, and of the particular circumstances of the providers and their client groups. No such decision will be taken until the pilot arrangements have been thoroughly evaluated.

Skill Centres

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, following the recent announcement on the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency, he will make a statement on the future of those employment rehabilitation centres that are located on the same sites as skill centres.

Mr. Eggar: Arrangements will be made to ensure the continuation of employment rehabilitation services in localities currently served by employment rehabilitation centres. In most cases they will remain on existing sites for up to three years but in some areas it may be necessary to find alternative premises. The future role of the employment rehabilitation service is being considered in the context of the review of the Department's services for people with disabilities.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to continue monitoring the number of trainees with disabilities receiving training at skill centres, following the Skills Training Agency's privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: I do not anticipate that the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency will have any immediate effect on the existing monitoring arrangements.

Industrial Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many employees there are in each industry or industrial sector which is represented by a non-statutory industrial training organisation:

(2) if he will list the number of people employed by each of the non-statutory industrial training organisations for which he has figures available;

(3) if he will publish a list of the existing non-statutory industrial training organisations;

(4) what information he has on *(a)* the number of training professionals employed by each non-statutory industrial training organisation as a ratio of the total number of employees in the industry or industrial sector which it covers and *(b)* how many full-time and part-time training professionals are employed by the Meat Industries Training Organisation;

(5) what information he has on how many non-statutory industrial training organisations represent *(a)* more than 50 per cent. of firms in their sector and *(b)* more than 50 per cent. of the employees in their sector; and which are the organisations concerned;

(6) what information he has on how many non-statutory industrial training organisations represent *(a)* more than 75 per cent. of firms in their sector and *(b)* more than 75 per cent. of the employees in their sector; and which are the organisations concerned.

Mr. Nicholls: The table lists all the organisations regarded as independent industry training organisations, together with the latest information available which is from the Institute of Manpower Studies report, "The Full Fact Finding Study of the NSTO System", produced in December 1987 for the former Manpower Services Commission.

Industry training organisation	*Staff*		*Employees in sector*	*Percentage of sector covered*	
	[1] *Management and training*	*Total*		*Firms*	*Employees*
British Agriculture and Garden Machinery Association	1·20	1·50	20,000	77	90
Agricultural Co-operatives Training Council	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association	0·50	1·25	60,000	65	83
Foreign Airlines Training Council	0·20	0·25	9,000	73	78
AFA Technology (Atomic Energy)	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Aviation Training Association	4·00	6·00	150,000	16	48
Federation of Bakers	0·15	0·25	50,000	100	100
National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners and Caterers	0·50	0·60	[2]—	83	[2]—

Industry training organisation	Staff			Percentage of sector covered	
	[1] Management and training	Total	Employees in sector	Firms	Employees
Scottish Association of Master Bakers	1·10	1·20	[2]—	80	[2]—
Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance	2·00	5·00	100,000	89	90
Bookhouse Training Centre	2·00	5·00	20,000	100	100
British Brush Manufacturers	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Builders Merchants' Federation	14·00	18·50	62,000	79	97
Bus and Coach Training	2·00	3·00	174,300	45	99
Caravan, Camping and Related Self Catering ITO (formerly National Caravan Council Limited)	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Carpet Industry Training Council	1·20	1·50	18,000	60	78
British Cement Association	[2]—	[2]—	9,000	100	100
Ceramics Industry Training Organisation	7·00	10·00	35,000	14	93
Chemical Industries Association	3·50	5·50	200,000	[2]—	90
China and Ball Clay Industries Training Board	[2]—	[2]—	7,015	100	100
British Coal	3·60	5·00	140,000	100	100
Computing Services Industry Training Council	2·00	5·00	44,000	11	75
Precast Concrete Industry Training Association	3·00	4·00	16,000	21	75
Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Products Association	[2]—	[2]—	2,044	100	100
Cosmetics, Toiletry and Perfumery Association	0·30	0·80	30,000	[2]—	95
Cotton and Allied Textile ITO	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Dairy Trade Federation	1·20	2·20	93,500	59	97
Scottish Distributive Industries Training Council	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
National Association of Industrial Distributors	1·00	4·00	20,000	53	60
Drinks Industries Training Association	2·50	4·20	90,000	100	100
Electricity Industry Training Committee	7·00	7·00	147,795	100	100
Envelope Makers & Manufacturing Stationers Association	0·30	0·30	5,000	100	100
British Fibreboard Packaging Employers Association (formerly BFPA)	2·00	2·75	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Fibre Cement Manufacturers Association	1·00	1·00	2,098	100	100
Food Manufacturers Council for Industrial Training	1·00	2·00	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
British Footwear Manufacturers Federation	0·08	0·10	48,000	36	83
Forestry Training Council	1·00	2·00	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
National Institute of Fresh Produce	5·00	6·00	65,000	[2]—	[2]—
UK Association of Frozen Food Producers	0·08	0·10	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
British Furniture Manufacturers Federation	0·20	0·40	78,000	[2]—	71
British Gas plc	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Glass Training Ltd.	5·50	6·50	39,000	100	100
Hairdressing Training Board	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Joint National Horse Education and Training Council	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Insurance Industry Training Council	1·00	2·00	243,000	100	91
National Supervisory Council for Intruder Alarms	1·00	1·20	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Knitting & Lace Industries Training Resources Agency	3·00	3·50	90,000	22	80
British Leather Confederation	1·00	1·30	8,000	88	91
Leather Goods (Walsall CCI)	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Local Government Training Board	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Man-Made Fibres Industry Training Advisory Board	2·50	4·10	15,000	82	97
Marine Training Association	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
British Marine Industries Federation	2·00	3·00	14,500	[2]—	86
Meat Industry Training Organisation	[2]—	[2]—	150,000	[2]—	80
Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association	5·50	5·50	1,500	[2]—	60
Merchant Navy Training Board	2·00	2·50	30,000	100	100
Incorporated National Association of British & Irish Millers	4·00	6·00	6,000	96	100
British Narrow Fabrics Association	0·15	0·20	5,500	80	86
Newspaper Publishers Association	1·00	2·00	20,000	100	100
Newspaper Society	2·00	4·00	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
British Nuclear Fuels plc	6·70	7·70	16,900	[2]—	[2]—
Flexible Packaging Association	0·60	0·60	7,500	90	87
National Packaging Confederation	[2]—	[2]—	25,000	25	30
Paintmakers Association of GB	2·00	2·00	20,000	33	85
British Paper & Board Industry Education & Training Council	4·00	6·00	34,000	91	94
National Association of Paper Merchants	0·07	0·10	20,000	[2]—	75
Periodicals Training Council	3·00	4·50	20,000	49	80
Petroleum Training Federation	7·50	11·00	60,000	82	92
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry	1·00	2·00	84,000	[2]—	71
British Ports Federation	1·00	2·00	41,208	100	100
Post Office	5·00	5·00	191,434	100	100
Society of Master Printers of Scotland	1·70	2·20	[2]—	71	[2]—
British Printing Industries	7·00	21·00	140,000	51	70
Quarry Products Training Council	2·00	2·60	32,500	56	97
British Railways Board	11·00	12·00	139,000	100	100
London Regional Transport (Rail Operations)	[2]—	[2]—	21,000	100	100
Refractories, Clay Pipes and Allied Industries Training Council	2·00	2·50	11,000	82	86
National Retail Training Council	4·50	5·50	2,400,000	86	83
British Rubber Industry Training Organisation	7·00	10·00	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Seafish Industry Authority	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—

Industry training organisation	Staff		Employees in sector	Percentage of sector covered	
	[1] Management and training	Total		Firms	Employees
British Security Industry Association	1·50	2·00	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
National Association of Multiple Shoe Repairers	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Society Master Shoe Repairers	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Silica and Moulding Sands Association	0·50	0·70	1,820	78	99
Small Ships Training Group Association	1·30	1·30	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Soap and Detergent Industry Association	1·00	2·00	13,500	[2]—	96
British Soft Drinks Association	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
British Sports and Allied Industries Federation	0·01	0·01	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
British Steel Corporation	8·00	16·00	51,000	100	100
Midland Independent Steel Training Association	2·50	3·50	72,000	[2]—	11
Northern Independent Steel Training Association	5·00	7·00	6,500	82	93
United Kingdom Sugar Industry Association	3·00	3·00	10,500	100	100
British Telecom	[2]—	[2]—	223,084	100	100
British Timber Merchants Association (England and Wales)	0.07	0.10	12,300	21	28
Timber Trade Training Association	4·40	5·20	38,000	[2]—	71
Tobacco Industry Training Organisation	1·50	2·00	19,368	100	100
Association of British Travel Agents	51·50	64·00	100,000	[2]—	90
United Kingdom Softwood Sawmillers Association (formerly Home Timber Merchants Association of Scotland)	0·10	0·15	2,000	82	90
Wallcovering Manufacturers Association of Great Britain	[2]—	[2]—	4,101	90	[2]—
National Association of Warehouse Keepers	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Water Authorities Association	1·00	1·50	50,000	100	100
British Waterways Board	[2]—	[2]—	3,000	100	100
Wire and Wire Rope Employers Association	1·00	1·50	6,750	68	89
Scottish Woolen Industries	1·00	1·20	5,000	96	80
Confederation of British Wool Textiles	3·00	4·50	40,000	83	86

[1] Includes directly employed operational staff-management, training etc. plus staff employed for YTS.
[2] ITO not included in research or information not available.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of people employed by each of the statutory industry training boards.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is as follows:

Industry training board	Number of employers
Clothing and allied products	126
Construction	1,311
Engineering	602
Hotel and catering	446
Offshore petroleum	65
Plastics processing	75
Road transport	470

The source of the information is the 1988-89 annual reports of the industry training boards except for the offshore petroleum figure which relates to the annual report for the year ending 31 December 1988.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will happen to the premises and other assets currently held on behalf of their industries by statutory industry training boards when non-statutory bodies assume responsibility for training in the sectors concerned.

Mr. Nicholls: Provisions in the Employment Act 1989 enable a statutory industry training board to transfer all or any of its assets to a successor organisation on trust to be used for charitable purposes which are related to training for employment.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which sectors of industry, previously covered by a statutory industrial training board, are no longer represented by non-statutory industrial training organisations.

Mr. Nicholls: All significant sectors formerly in scope to industry training boards have either their own independent industry training organisation or access to such an organisation.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in what circumstances the DE Training Agency will take steps to recover payments of ET training allowances paid to people no longer entitled to them; in how many cases the DETA has taken such steps; how much has been recovered; whether there have been any prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is the normal practice to seek recovery in all cases where it is clear that a person has received a training allowance to which they are not entitled. Prosecution would be considered only where there was evidence of fraudulent intent and no prosecutions have taken place in cases of the kind referred to in the question. Information on numbers of cases in which recovery has been sought and the amounts involved is not held centrally.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men on employment training are married parents; and how many of these have (i) claimed and (ii) been granted child care payments.

Mr. Nicholls: Financial help with child care is available only to lone parents on employment training. At the end of December 1989 about 3 per cent. of all those on the programme were receiving child care payments. It is not known how many claims for child care allowances were made or met or how many trainees making these claims were either men or women or whether or not they were married.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men on employment training are single parents; and how many of these have (i) claimed and (ii) been granted child care payments.

Mr. Nicholls: At the end of December 1989 about 3 per cent. of all those on employment training were receiving child care payments. It is not known how many claims for child care allowances were made or met or how many trainees making these claims were either men or women. All trainees receiving child care payments are single parents.

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he proposes to improve employment training in the light of the establishment of training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will have the flexibility to make Employment Training even more responsive to the training needs of both individuals and employers within local labour markets. I am arranging for the TECs to enjoy:

- the freedom to decide arrangements for assessment and guidance leading to an agreed individual training programme for all entrants to ET;
- the freedom to decide how training should be designed;
- the freedom to determine how training providers are funded;
- the freedom to determine many of the terms and conditions for trainees;
- more freedom in the provision of ET to people unemployed for less than 6 months;
- the freedom to enable individuals to train for longer than the existing limit of 12 months (within an agreed budget).

The funding for TECs will reflect success in helping people into jobs, self-employment, further education or other full-time training. At least 10 per cent. of ET funding will be for such positive outcomes achieved by their trainees.

The arrangements for payment of training allowances will remain unchanged. These new flexibilities will enable TECs to be creative in designing attractive and effective training options, while building on the excellent experience of employment training to date.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the total numbers of special group entrants to employment training without being unemployed for six months for the categories *(a)* people with disabilities, *(b)* ex-offenders, *(c)* those seeking high technology shortage skills, *(d)* on enterprise training, *(e)* women returners, *(f)* ex-regulars, *(g)* inner-city residents in certain pilot areas and *(h)* lone parents between September 1988 and December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Information on ex-offenders, high technology shortage skills entrants and inner city residents in pilot areas in the special eligibility category could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Information for the other groups is given in the table.

Employment training special eligibility group entrants as a proportion of all entrants September 1988 to December 1989 (Estimated)

Group	*Estimated proportion of all entrants Per cent.*
Enterprise trainees	4·0
People with disabilities	3·0
Ex-regulars	[1]0·5
Women returners	3·0
Lone parents	2·0

[1] Less than.

Health and Safety Executive

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the effectiveness of the Health and Safety Executive's work.

Mr. Nicholls: The main responsibility for ensuring effectiveness lies with the Health and Safety Commission. In approving the commission's annual plan of work ministers have regard to effectiveness both of programmes and management systems.

Recent and current initiatives to improve effectiveness include:

(a) since 1982, all new regulations have been subject to cost-benefit analysis;

(b) a 1985 Report "Measuring the Effectiveness of HSE's Field Activities" brought together findings on various regulatory and enforcement activities. Since then a number of further studies have been conducted, and action to improve effectiveness taken.

(c) improving effectiveness is a primary objective of HSE's reorganisation, on a more integrated basis, of its field divisions from this April.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that copies of the operating and business plans for training and enterprise councils are placed in the Library as soon as they are published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils will be required to publish a summary of their corporate and business plans. I shall arrange for these summaries to be placed in the Library as they become available.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the public funding in cash terms and real terms available for each training and enterprise council operative as from 1 April for the terminal year 1990-91, together with the public funding currently available to the Training Agency for 1989-90 for the area covered by each training and enterprise council.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's plans for expenditure on training and enterprise are set out in chapter 6 of the public expenditure White Paper (CM 1006). Budgets for individual TECs will be determined after the TEC's corporate and business plan has been approved and a contract signed. The great majority of TECs (and local enterprise companies in Scotland) are not planning to start operations until later in the financial year.

It is not generally possible to compare directly TEC budgets with those of Training Agency Offices. Over 100 TECs are being established, which compares with 57 area offices.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Nicholls: All general management courses provided by the Employment Department group include sessions on equal opportunities for women and people from ethnic minority groups and with disabilities. While no detailed figures are available I understand therefore that the great majority of senior regional and operational managers will have received training on equal opportunities issues.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Department group operates two care-parent schemes for pre-school age children at Bootle and Sheffield. We run holiday play schemes for children aged five years and over at Runcorn, Sheffield, London (two) and Coventry; with other Government Departments we run play schemes at Bootle, Edinburgh and London and we have places in other Government Department schemes at Glasgow and Liverpool. We hope to open four day nurseries this year at Bootle, Runcorn, Sheffield and Swindon. All parts of the group are actively pursuing initiatives to increase child care provision. The group provides support for this where it can be justified in value for money terms. Staff who wish to take advantage of play schemes and nurseries are required to contribute towards the running costs.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's equal opportunities officer is a grade 6.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotiion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Department group is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in recruitment and promotion. A statement to this effect is included in all recruitment advertising and in all circulars notifying staff of promotion panels and inviting applications.

There are clear guidelines on the advertising of recruitment opportunities to ensure that they can be seen by all eligible job seekers from all parts of the community and to ensure that the advertisements do not impose potentially discriminatory criteria such as unnecessary age restrictions. In order to meet the needs of women returners, recruitment opportunities are, whenever practicable, advertised as suitable for part time workers. Staff involved in recruitment are trained in selection procedures to avoid unfair discrimination.

For promotion, all staff are considered on their merits as individuals regardless of sex, racial origin, disability and age. Where a minimum period of service is required this applies to all staff. For staff who have returned to work after a period of absence, service before and after the break may be aggregated.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Eggar: In the Employment Department group at 1 January 1990 women comprised 12 per cent. of staff at both grade seven and grade six level, 14 per cent. at grade five and 11 per cent. at grade three. There were no women at grades one, two and four.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report: "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom."

Mr. Nicholls: The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, where they wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, have encouraged the development of a range of high-quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women and men of the employed labour force have a length of service in employment of *(a)* less than two years and *(b)* less than five years; and what number and proportion of those employed for less than five years are part-time workers working (i) less than eight hours, (ii) less than 12 hours, (iii) less than 16 hours and (iv) less than 20 hours a week, giving the most recently available figures.

Mr. Nicholls: Estimates from the 1988 labour force survey, as requested, are shown in the table.

Employees and self-employed, by length of time continuously employed by current employer or continuously self-employed by basic usual hours[2] worked per week, by sex—Great Britain, Spring 1988

Thousands and per cent.

	Employees				Self-employed			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
Length of employment/hours worked per week	*000's*	*Per cent.*	*000's*	*Per cent.*	*000's*	*Per cent.*	*000's*	*Per cent.*
Less than 2 years	3,261	—	3,641	—	574	—	259	—
At least 2 but less than 5 years	2,167	—	2,182	—	472	—	177	—
Total less than 5 years	5,428	100	5,823	100	1,046	100	436	100
of which								
Work less than 8 hours	117	2·2	395	6·8	12	1·2	58	13·4
At least 8 but less than 12 hours	99	1·8	461	7·9	[1]	[1]	33	7·5
At least 12 but less than 16 hours	79	1·5	564	9·7	10	0·9	34	7·9
At least 16 but less than 20 hours	44	0·8	365	6·3	[1]	[1]	19	4·3

[1] Sample size too small for reliable estimate.
[2] Paid hours usually worked each week, excluding paid and unpaid overtime and meal-breaks.
Source: 1988 Labour Force Survey.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the rate of unemployment in each member state of the European Community at the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* The information requested is available from the Library in the following publications: "Main Economic Indicators", published by OECD; and "Unemployment in the Community", published by Eurostat.

Equal Pay

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to amend the equal pay for work of equal value legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to amend the equal pay legislation. The Equal Opportunities Commission, which has a statutory duty to review the legislation, is currently doing so and any proposals for change which may emerge from the commission's review will be carefully considered, as will proposals put forward by any other interested bodies including those already made by the Confederation of British Industry.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list for each of the past 25 years the average pay for a woman as a proportion of that for a man.

Mr. Nicholls: Women's hourly earnings as a proportion of men's are shown in the table. Comparable data are not available before 1970 or in the period 1971 to 1973.

	per cent.
1970	63·1
1974	67·4
1975	72·1
1976	75·1
1977	75·5
1978	73·9
1979	73·0
1980	73·5
1981	74·8
1982	73·9
1983	74·2
1984	73·5
1985	74·1
1986	74·3
1987	73·6
1988	75·1
1989	76·4

Note: Based on average gross hourly earnings, excluding overtime, of full-time employees aged 18 and over, whose pay was not affected by absence, as at April of each year.
Source: New Earnings Survey.

Domestic Servants

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many domestic servants are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated from the 1988 labour force survey that in spring 1988 there were 20,000 men and 171,000 women in employment in domestic services in Great Britain.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's policy is that sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and is treated as a disciplinary offence. Guidance on our policy and on the reporting and handling of complaints is included in our personnel handbook which is available to all staff.

We have monitored this policy since 1 July 1985 and in the period from then to 31 December 1989 (the last date for which figures are available) 88 cases have been reported.

Appropriate action has been taken in all cases. Disciplinary penalties imposed have ranged from warnings to being employed in a lower grade.

Pin-ups

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's policy is that sexual harassment at work is not tolerated and is treated as a disciplinary offence. The guidance issued to staff gives examples of what might constitute sexual harassment. These include

"displays or circulation of sexually offensive material, for example pin-ups".

My right hon. and learned Friend does not therefore consider that any further instructions are needed.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much of the expenditure on action for jobs television advertising in 1988-89 was spent through the Central Office of Information.

Mr. Eggar: All of the expenditure on action for jobs television advertising in 1988-89 was spent through the Central Office of Information.

Radiation (Code of Practice)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many copies have been published of the draft approved code of practice , "Part 4 Dose Limitation —Restriction of Exposure: Additional Guidance on Regulation 6 of the Ionising Radiation Regulations," produced by the Health and Safety Commission; to whom this document has been distributed; by what date any comments should be sent to the Health and Safety Commission; and what response his Department is planning to make to the consultative document.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 7,000 copies were printed of the consultative document, published on 5 February 1990, containing the draft approved code of practice on restriction of exposure to ionising radiations. Copies were distributed to international organisations, professional bodies, government departments, employers' associations, representatives of workers, and local authorities. Copies were also placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Comments should be sent to the Health and Safety Commission by 30 April 1990.

My right hon. and learned Friend will await the advice of the Health and Safety Commission in the light of comments received on the consultative document.

Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to set up by no later than 31 December 1992 a comprehensive and effective framework of sector training organisations.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government welcome the continuing support by employers throughout most of industry and commerce for employer-led industry training organisations (ITOs). These bodies have the lead role in establishing occupational standards and monitoring key skill requirements in their sectors. There are currently some 117 industry training organisations, estimated to cover over 80 per cent. of the civilian working population. Employers in a number of other sectors are in the process of establishing their own arrangements. In recent years most ITOs have received financial support to help them develop their effectiveness, particularly in the areas of standard setting and future skill requirements.

The Government have welcomed the establishment of the voluntary National Council of Industry Training Organisations (NCITO) which includes in its aims the bringing of all such organisations up to the standard set by the best. The Training Agency continues to provide initial financial assistance to NCITO to develop a code of practice for ITOs and to draw up a database about their activities and services.

Homeworkers

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the statutory provisions that apply to the employment of homeworkers; and whether he has any plans to amend existing legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: The following legislation applies to homeworkers who are employees, in the same way as it does to other employees. There are no plans to amend it.

Equal Pay Act 1970
Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Employment Protection Act 1975
Race Relations Act 1976
Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978
Employment Acts 1980, 1982 and 1988
Trade Union Act 1984
Wages Act 1986[1]
All Health and Safety legislation[1]

[1] Part II of the Wages Act 1986 and all Health and Safety legislation applies to homeworkers, irrespective of their employment status.

Working Mothers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage women to work after they have given birth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Except where health and safety provisions set minimum time limits it must be a matter of personal choice for the woman concerned when and whether she goes to work or stays at home to look after her children.

TRANSPORT

Road Lighting

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he has undertaken any studies in the United Kingdom on the implementation of transitional lighting and the effect of it on accident rates at night;

(2) what research he is undertaking to assess the safety implications for a transitional lighting system to allow drivers to adjust from lit motorways to darkness.

Mr. Atkins: Studies in many countries, including the United Kingdom, have shown that the transition from bright sunlight conditions to those lighting conditions in a road tunnel is a problem because of the reduction in road surface luminance of about 50,000 candelas per square metre. On average, this transition lasts several seconds. Transitional lighting is therefore justified and provided.

The equivalent transition from lit to unlit motorway at night represents a reduction in luminance of just 2 candelas per square metre and is completed in about one second. The potential in these circumstances for any effect on accident rates is negligible. No research is therefore being undertaken into this aspect.

If my hon. Friend has specific evidence that he feels merits looking into, I will consider it.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the standard intensity of lighting on lit motorways, rural and urban roads.

Mr. Atkins: The standard average luminance of lighting on lit trunk roads in England is as follows:

	Candelas per square metre
Motorways	2·0
Dual carriageways and high speed roads	1·5
Other trunk roads	1·0

These standards are in accordance with the recommendations of the appropriate national and international standards bodies.

The standard of lighting installed on other roads is a matter for the highway authority concerned.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what technology is available to light sections of roads and motorways at different levels to allow people to adjust to lighting changes.

Mr. Atkins: Lighting technology is available, or can be readily adapted, to provide a range of road lighting levels. This can be achieved by altering the type of lamp, the electrical control system, the column height and the column spacing, or by a combination of these means.

Road Humps

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many local authorities are known to have installed speed restricting measures, such as road humps, in residential areas; and when his Department will have completed the revision of regulations aimed at the wider installation of road humps.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will lay before Parliament the revised road hump regulations.

Mr. Atkins: Road humps and other speed restricting measures are installed by local authorities at their own discretion. Consequently, no central records are kept. The appropriate use of road humps should make a significant contribution to the safety of local roads and we aim to bring the new regulations into force before Easter.

London Transport

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women, have retrained as bus drivers since London Regional Transport has adopted its one-person operated buses policy;

(2) how many London Underground station staff have been employed by London Transport or London Regional Transport for each of the last 25 years;

(3) if he will list the number of guards employed by London Transport or London Regional Transport for each of the last 25 years;

(4) if he will list the numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women employed by London Transport/London Regional Transport as bus drivers for each of the last 25 years;

(5) if he will list the numbers of conductors employed by London Transport or London Regional Transport on buses for each of the last 25 years; and how many of these were women.

Mr. Portillo: These are matters which fall within the day-to-day management responsibility of London Regional Tranport and its operating subsidiaries, London Underground Limited and London Buses Limited.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Atkins: The department is currently conducting a comprehensive survey of child care needs in London. The possibilities for providing child care facilities outside London are also being investigated. Pre-school child care facilities are planned for the driver and vehicle licensing centre in Swansea. Holiday playschools are also made available to the Department's staff in both Swansea and London. The Department provides accommodation for all these schemes. Future plans will be considered in the light of current surveys.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom."

Mr. Atkins: The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues has encouraged the development of a range of high-quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Atkins: Most general management courses include coverage of issues involving equal opportunities for women as part of general sessions on equal opportunities and one course, "Women in Management", includes a specific session on equal opportunites for women. There is no record of the number of grade 6, and above, officers who have recieved training on equal opportunities for women.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Atkins: Grade five.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career-break due to child care.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has a policy of fair and open competition in recruitment and promotion. Women

are encouraged to return to work by arrangements for reinstatement and by the availability of part-time working and job sharing. There are few upper age limits for recruitment. The criterion is that new entrants must be able to give effective service before retirement.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Atkins: The proportions are as follows:

	Per cent.
Grade 7	6
Grade 6	2
Grade 5	9
Grade 4	None
Grade 3	5
Grades 1 and 2	None

Sexual Harassment

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Atkins: The Civil Service policy on sexual harassment is set out in the programme of action to achieve equal opportunities for women in the Civil Service which was published by the Cabinet Office management and personnel office in 1984. The Department has made it clear to all staff that sexual harassment at work will not be tolerated and will be dealt with as a disciplinary measure through the Department's complaints procedures. Guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff. Complaints have been recorded since mid-1986. Since then there have been seven formal complaints. It is not the Department's practice to publish disciplinary action taken in individual cases.

Pin-ups

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all of his Departmental premises.

Mr. Atkins: Instructions have been issued not to display such material if it offends.

A4, West London

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the best estimates of current westbound peak pm flows on the A4 before and after the Hogarth roundabout at Chiswick; and what projections have been taken into account in the appraisal of option 12 of the west London assessment study.

Mr. Atkins: A count of westbound traffic on the A4 east and west of Hogarth roundabout was taken by consultants in May 1989. This revealed flows of approximately 5,000 and 4,500 respectively in the afternoon peak hour.

Option 12 of the west London assessment study has been assessed using data from the London transportation studies model which only provides information for the morning peak. Traffic is expected to increase as a result of economic growth, population changes, etc. The combined effect of these changes and option 12 is forecast to be a reduction of 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. respectively.

M4/A4 Corridor

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the M4/A4 corridor study was initiated; what are the terms of reference; which consultants are involved; when the report is expected; and if it will be published.

Mr. Atkins: The study was initiated in June 1988. It is being carried out on the Department's behalf by Howarth Humphreys and Partners Ltd. They have been asked to develop a consistent strategy for management of the motorway and trunk road network with the objective of improving the reliability of journey times between central London and Heathrow. The consultants have made some initial proposals which are being considered by the Department. Local highway authorities and the BAA are being consulted. The final report is expected later this year and will be published.

Buses (Access)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the new buses which meet the specifications of floor level and related matters for people with disabilities and elderly people; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A comprehensive list is not available.

The majority of new buses now produced in the United Kingdom are fitted, at the request of operators or local authorities, with some or all of the features recommended by the Disabled Persons Transort Advisory Committee (DPTAC) in their "Recommended Specification for Vehicles Used To Operate Local Services".

Work is now in hand to develop European standards for low floor buses which will be accessible to wheelchair users.

Coal Imports

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of coal imported through the port of Sunderland for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: HM Customs and Excise figures for imports of coal, coke and briquettes at Sunderland, which include imports at Seaham, are given in the table.

Year	*Tonnes*
1979	22,254
1980	12,605
1981	6,245
1982	43,773
1983	101,544
1984	23,111
1985	4,870
1986	245,904
1987	216,901
1988	436,659
1989[1]	310,514

[1] Provisional.

Anti-lock Braking

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the introduction of regulations governing the fitting of anti-lock braking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Draft regulations published today introduce the anti-lock braking requirements set by European Community directive 88/194 for certain types of heavy goods vehicles, including trailers, and motorway and inter-urban coaches. The Community proposals are for mandatory anti-lock on new vehicles in the following categories:

(a) towing vehicles over 16 tonnes and trailers over 10 tonnes gross weight; and

(b) touring coaches and intercity buses over 12 tonnes gross weight.

The draft regulations apply to new trailers manufactured on or after 1 October 1991 and new motor vehicles first used on or after 1 April 1992.

Anti-lock increases braking stability and reduces jack-knifing in slippery road conditions.

A590

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the A590 trunk road between Levens Bridge and Lindale has recently been coned off for a length of about four miles, preventing any overtaking.

Mr. Atkins: For safety reasons. Although the first phase of resurfacing is limited to the dual carriageway sections, we need to prevent overtaking and excessive speeds on the intervening single carriageway. This reduces the risk of accidents at and approaching the working areas. The resurfacing will shortly transfer to the single carriageway. We shall then start central reserve safety fencing installation on the dual carriageways.

Milford Haven

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received the report of the inspector appointed to examine the application by Cmaine and other fishing vessel companies operating from Milford Haven for registration; and when he expects to reach a decision on their applications.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have not yet received the inspector's report. I shall reach a decision on the applications for registration as soon as possible after I have received the report.

Rail Subsidies (West Germany)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Christchurch of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 9, if he will place in the Library any documentation he has relating to the West German Government's belief that their subsidies to their railway system are outrageous.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* I have nothing to add to my right hon. Friend's previous answer.

Commuter Trains

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last travelled officially on a rush hour commuter train; and what assessment he made of the level of service offered and the conditions provided for commuters.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 28 February 1990]:* The last such journey undertaken by my right hon. Friend was on the Central line on 18 January. The service was quick and on time, but the train was very crowded. London Underground's £720 million programme of investment will increase the peak capacity of this line by 16 per cent., to the considerable benefit of those who use it regularly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

State Benefits

5. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people depend entirely on state benefits for their income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the number of people depending entirely on state benefits is not available. In 1987, the latest year for which an estimate is available, social security contributed either in whole or in part to the incomes or family incomes of around 38 million people.

Child Benefit

8. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his decision not to uprate child benefit by the change in the retail prices index in April 1990.

29. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his decision not to uprate child benefit by the retail prices index change in April.

30. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his decision not to uprate child benefit by the change in the retail prices index in April.

Mr. Newton: No.

12. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to means-test child benefit.

52. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to means-test child benefit.

64. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to means-test child benefit.

Mr. Newton: No.

22. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in the current financial year of increasing child benefit to the same level in real terms as prevailed in 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: About £540 million net.

31. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the future uprating of child benefit.

32. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the future uprating of child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As the law requires, the rate of child benefit will continue to be reviewed each year as part

of the annual review of social security benefit rates, and decisions will be made in the light of circumstances at the time.

42. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the take-up rate for child benefit.

68. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the take-up rate for child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Around 98 per cent.

45. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of uprating child benefit to bring it to the same level in real terms as it stood at in 1984.

59. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of uprating child benefit to bring it to the same level in real terms as it stood at in 1984.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) earlier today.

73. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the present arrangements for paying child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Child benefit is normally paid to mothers every four weeks through their bank or building society account or four-weekly or weekly by order book.

Benefit Deductions

10. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants have deductions from their benefit at source.

57. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants have deductions from their benefit at source.

72. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants have deductions from their benefit at source.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Just under 10 per cent. of income support recipients have one or more deductions from their benefit. Information on deductions from other social security benefits is not held centrally.

Pension Schemes

16. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to extend self-administration of pension schemes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I presume my hon. Friend is referring to our announcement of the exemption of certain small self-administered schemes from our proposals to restrict pension schemes from engaging in employer-related investments. I announced during the Committee stage of the Social Security Bill last week that, in view of recent evidence of an increase in the practice, the Government have decided to commission a report before deciding what precise restrictions shall be introduced in regulations.

Community Charge Rebates

19. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the rebate system for the community charge; and how many people he expects to take advantage of it.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The community charge benefit scheme to be introduced in April this year is significantly more generous than the old rate rebates system. We estimate that 9·75 million chargepayers will be helped in 1990-91, at a cost of £1·75 billion.

71. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the cost of advertising and explaining the community charge rebate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Community charge benefit is being advertised by the Department of Social Security, the Department of the Environment, the Welsh Office and Scottish Office and by local authorities. The Department of Social Security will shortly publish an information leaflet and the Department of the Environment has also published a series of leaflets on rebates and reductions. The total cost of these leaflets will be over £300,000. The Department of the Environment's advertising campaign covering newspapers, magazines, television and radio ran from January to February at a cost of £4 million. Local authorities are responsible for the day-to-day administration of community charge benefit, and may advertise community charge benefit in ways that they consider to be suitable. It is not possible to estimate their costs.

Low-income Families

20. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be spent on benefits for children in low-income families, excluding child benefit, in the next financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Our planned expenditure on provision for families in 1990-91, excluding child benefit, is nearly £5·4 billion. With the addition of child benefit expenditure of £4·6 billion, this makes a total provision for the family of nearly £10 billion.

58. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be spent on benefits for children in low-income families in the next financial year, excluding child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Planned expenditure on provision for families in 1990-91, excluding child benefit, is £5,359 million. This includes the extra help to low income families with children which since April 1988 has amounted to £350 million in real terms. The benefits included in this total are one-parent benefit, family credit, maternity benefit and statutory maternity pay, and income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit paid to lone parents and to people looking after elderly parents.

Community Care Grants

21. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will revise directive 29 to allow claimants for community care grants to be eligible for funds to pay deposits for rented housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no current plans to do so, but we will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many community care grants applications by month since January 1989 have been *(a)* met in full, *(b)* met in part, *(c)* dealt with by a combination of grant and loan, *(d)* met with a loan only and *(e)* refused.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 19 January at column *487*.

Social Fund

23. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review social fund appeals.

42. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review social fund appeals.

53. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review the operation of social fund appeals.

Mr. Scott: No. We are satisfied that the appeals system for the regulated part of the social fund, that is, funeral, maternity and cold weather payments, is working well.

24. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what percentage, of social fund loans have gone to pensioners.

Mr. Scott: People aged 60 and over received 21,000 budgeting loans and 3,600 crisis loans in the period April 1989 to January 1990. This represents 4·5 and 0·1 per cent. respectively of loans awarded. In addition, community care grants were awarded in 8,300 cases where a loan had been applied for.

28. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the social fund refusal rate for the latest available month.

38. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the social fund refusal rate for the latest available month.

44. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the social fund refusal rate for the latest available month.

Mr. Scott: Details of the individual refusal rates for the three types of payment are in the Library. The overall refusal rate can be derived from the numbers of applications decided and awards made which are also available in the Library.

50. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to improve the access of people on invalidity benefit to social fund community care grants.

62. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to improve the access of people on invalidity benefit to social fund community care grants.

65. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to improve the access of people on invalidity benefit to social fund community care grants.

Mr. Scott: No. Like single payments, where help could only be given to people entitled to supplementary benefit, social fund community care grants are intended for those in receipt of income support.

67. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review local social fund budgets.

Mr. Scott: As a result of our close monitoring of the social fund, I recently announced that an extra £3 million had been made available this year for 106 offices coming under pressure from an increase in demand. We are currently considering social fund allocations to individual offices for 1990-91 and will make an announcement in due course.

74. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the payment from the social fund in the event of severe weather.

Mr. Scott: No. We believe that £5 is a reasonable amount to pay towards the extra expenses for heating incurred in each week of very cold weather, given that ordinary heating costs are an element in regular weekly benefit.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to ensure that the social fund loans budget become self-financing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 29 January at *column 35*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West of 26 February, (*Official Report*, column *589*, on the High Court judgment on the social fund, if he will send a copy of the revised guidance to the honourable Member for Oldham, West at the same time as it is placed in the Library.

Mr. Scott: Yes.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish the monthly anticipated expenditure profile for the social fund for the year 1990-91;

(2) when he expects to announce the local office allocations for the social fund for the year 1990-91;

(3) when he will announce the formula on which local office allocations for the social fund for 1990-91 will be based.

Mr. Scott An announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will be revising the cash limits for the social fund announced for 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 22 February 1990 at column *894*.

Departmental Service

25. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to improve his Department's service to the public.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since the Government reforms were introduced in 1988, the social security system has become simpler for claimants to understand and easier for staff to operate. As a result there have been very real all-round improvements in standards of service to the public. In particular the average 1989-90 times taken to clear income support claims and callers have both improved by 24 per cent. when compared with pre-reforms' performance.

I am aware, however, that there is still room for further improvement, particularly in certain inner cities. We are tackling this by relocating some work, which requires no face-to-face contact, away from London to areas where we have fewer problems over staff recruitment and retention. In addition, between now and 1991, we expect our programme to computerise social security operations in all local offices to make a major impact on the speed and accuracy of the service they provide.

Pensioners (Income)

26. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the most recent figure for pensioners whose incomes fall in the lowest quintile of national income distribution.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures on the proportion of pensioners whose incomes fall in the lowest fifth of national income distribution.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that in 1979, a total of 38 per cent. of pensioners were in the bottom quintile of national income distribution, and in 1987 the proportion had improved to 24 per cent.

33. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the increase in pensioners' average net incomes since 1979.

39. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the increase in pensioners' average net incomes since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures he has for the change in pensioners' incomes from savings since 1979.

55. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures he has for the increases in pensioners' average net incomes since 1979.

63. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much pensioners' average net incomes have increased since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that between 1979 and 1987 average pensioners' total net income increased by over 31 per cent. in real terms. The figures also show that, over the same period, income pensioners receive from their savings more than doubled in real terms.

Disabled People

27. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on his proposals to extend help with the extra costs of disability to less severely disabled people of working age and below.

Mr. Scott: "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) which we laid before Parliament on 10 January includes a proposal to introduce a new disability allowance in April 1992 for people of working age and below. The new benefit will incorporate the existing payments made through attendance allowance and mobility allowance within a common structure for administration and adjudication and introduce new lower rate payments for people with moderate-to-severe disabilities who have care and mobility needs. The disability allowance will have two separate components: a care component paid at three different levels, and a mobility component paid at two levels. We estimate that about 850,000 people will receive the mobility component of the disability allowance, including 150,000 who do not qualify for help through mobility allowance. We estimate some 540,000 will receive the care component, including 140,000 who do not qualify for attendance allowance.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his policy towards the HELIOS programme of the European Community for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Information on the steps the Government are taking to ensure that the United Kingdom plays a full and active role in the HELIOS programme was given in my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 20 December 1989 at Column *302*. I opened the conference, which was well attended, to publicise the HELIOS programme on 9 February.

43. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent estimate he has made of how many people will gain from the disability package set out in "The Way Ahead".

47. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he estimates will benefit from the proposals set out in "The Way Ahead".

Mr. Scott: We estimate that some 850,000 disabled people and carers will gain from the proposals set out in "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People".

46. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on his plans for help to those who are less severely disabled and of working age and below.

Mr. Scott: The proposals set out in "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) include a number of measures to help those who are less severely disabled and of working age and below. In particular, the new disability allowance for people of working age and below will extend help with the extra costs of being disabled; the new disability employment credit will make it easier for disabled people to take up jobs; and there will be an increase of up to £10 a week in severe disablement allowance for those disabled early in life. These proposals are in addition to the package of 10 measures announced last October. These include improving the help provided by income support and housing benefit for the least well off who are disabled by increasing the disability premium for adults by £1·70 for a single person and £2·60 for a couple; helping families with disabled children by raising the disabled child's premium from £6·50 to £15·40; and

helping carers by introducing a carer's premium for those receiving invalid care allowance. In addition, mobility allowance will be extended to people who are both deaf and blind, attendance allowance will be extended to children under two, and the six-month waiting period for attendance allowance will be abolished for terminally ill people. We are also improving incentives to rehabilitation for employment by increasing by £6·50 the therapeutic earnings limit in invalidity benefit (IVB) and severe disablement allowance (SDA), and enabling people receiving IVB and SDA to keep their benefit when they go on an employment rehabilitation course.

48. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will benefit from new measures to help disabled people who do not qualify for attendance allowance or mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) on 5 February at column *519*.

Housing Benefit

34. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to increase housing benefit in real terms in the next financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The uprating of housing benefit and community charge benefit personal allowances and premiums takes effect in April 1990. Certain premiums are being increased above the amount required to maintain their value in real terms: these are the family premium, the disabled child premium and the lone parent premium. In October the lone parent's earnings disregard is to increase from £15 to £25, and a carer's premium is being introduced.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish for each local authority area in Northamptonshire, the number of people presently receiving housing benefit and income support together with housing benefit; and what are the costs involved.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table.

Housing Benefit: Estimated recipients and benefit expenditure

Local authority	*Housing benefit only* Numbers	*Housing benefit and Income support* Numbers	*Local authority estimated cost* £ million
Corby	1,834	2,500	4·5
Daventry	1,804	1,539	2·8
East Northampton	1,981	2,128	2·9
Kettering	2,989	2,904	4·6
Northampton	6,668	7,978	15·4
South Northants	1,896	1,392	2·3
Wellingborough	2,295	3,172	4·7

Note: Expenditure information is not available by recipient group.
Source: Local authority caseload returns November 1988-August 1989 and 1989-90 expenditure estimates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of households and persons in the London borough of Lambeth claiming housing benefit and rate relief in 1988 and in 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about the number of households or persons claiming housing benefit is not available. However, the estimated number of households receiving housing benefit is in the table.

	1988	*1989*
Assistance with rent only	1,538	1,492
Assistance with rates only	1,363	1,852
Assistance with both rent and rates	26,836	26,275
All housing benefit	29,737	29,619

Source: Local authority complete caseload return November 1988; partial return May 1989 supplemented by estimates.

Glasgow Office

35. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the working of the Glasgow social security centre; and what further plans he has to extend benefit-processing work away from south-east England.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The income support work of Ealing, Southall and Acton offices is being processed at the Glasgow social security centre. Notting Hill began transfer of work on 12 February. Monitoring and evaluation of performance at Glasgow indicates that claims are being processed faster and more accurately.

There are currently no plans to extend further benefit processing work away from south-east England beyond the 21 London offices already identified for relocation.

Disability Benefits

36. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from disablement organisations about disability benefits.

Mr. Scott: We have received comments on the OPCS surveys of disability and our proposals in "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) from 70 organisations of and for disabled people and from a large number of individual people with disabilities. The Social Security Advisory Committee have also written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State welcoming our proposals as a significant improvement to the system of benefits for disabled people. We shall continue to take into account the views of interested organisations and individuals in the course of further work on our proposals for change, in particular in our detailed work on the new disability allowance and the disability employment credit.

Community Care

37. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what views he sought from individuals and organisations involved in caring for mentally ill, disabled or elderly relatives at home as part of the review of benefits being undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Scott: The Government encouraged comments on the findings of the major surveys of disability carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys between 1985 and 1988; and our proposals for improving social security help for disabled people and carers have been made in the light of the views and comments of interested organisations. I have sent a copy of "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) to a number of

organisations, including the National Council for Carers, inviting their comments, and on 27 February my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of "Caring Costs", a coalition of over 20 voluntary organisations representing carers. We shall continue to take into account the views of interested organisations and individuals in the course of our detailed work on the proposals.

Income Support

40. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent discussions he has had on the level of income support payable to residents of private and voluntary residential and nursing homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have had meetings with a variety of interested organisations and individuals.

69. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has received any recent representations that able-bodied unemployed young people under 18 years refusing to take training should be paid income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have received no such representations. There is no reason why able-bodied 16 or 17-year-olds should not find work or a YTS place if they do not wish to continue their studies. If these young people refuse to take advantage of the opportunities available to them there is no justification for them to have recourse to the social security system.

However able-bodied young people who can go onto YTS but cannot live at home, for example because they have no home, would be at risk of physical or sexual abuse or are estranged from their families, can claim income support during the same period as the child benefit extension period, provided they are seeking a job or YTS place.

War Pensions

49. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent contact social security Ministers have had with representatives of war pensions interest groups.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My noble Friend Lord Henley, who has special responsibility for war pensions, regularly meets representatives of war pensioners and war widows to discuss matters of concern.

In the last six months he has chaired the central advisory committee on war pensions and met representatives of war pensions committes in three regions. He also opened the war pensioners' annual national homecraft and art exhibition. He has received deputations from the Royal British Legion and the War Widows Association of Great Britain. He attended remembrance day ceremonies at the Cenotaph and the Not Forgotten Association's Christmas party for war disabled pensioners. In addition he has visited the headquarters of the Royal British Legion and its village at Maidstone and answered letters on a variety of topics.

Family Incomes

54. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children live in families on, or within 40 per cent. above, the appropriate benefit level for their circumstances.

61. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children live in families with income on, or within 40 per cent. above, the appropriate benefit level for their circumstances.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) earlier today.

60. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people live in families with incomes which are on, or within 40 per cent. above, the appropriate benefit level for their circumstances.

66. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people live in families with incomes which are on, or within 40 per cent. above, the appropriate benefit level for their circumstances.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) earlier today.

Family Credit

56. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants entitled to family credit took up their entitlement in the last quarter of 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: During the last quarter of 1989 almost 244,000 claims for family credit were received, and in the same period 150,000 awards were made. Information about the caseload during that period is not yet complete, and estimates of the total number of families eligible for family credit at that time will be possible only when information becomes available from the 1989 family expenditure survey.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham on 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *284-86*, what is the Government's policy on the relativity between family credit ceilings and *(a)* inflation and *(b)* average earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Social security benefits, generally, are increased by reference to the movement in prices rather than earnings. The family credit ceilings derive from the level of the family credit rates, and those rates are reviewed each year in the light of the movement in retail prices excluding housing costs. In fact most of the increases in the family credit rates at the 1989 uprating and again at the 1990 uprating next month represent significantly more than that, as shown in the table.

	1989 Uprating per cent.	*1990 Uprating per cent*
Increase in RPI (excluding housing costs)	4·7	5·2
Actual Increase in Family Credit rates		
Adult Credit	4·7	8·2
Child Credits		
aged under 11	21·7	13·0
age 11-15	13·2	9·7
age 16-17	11·2	8·7
age 18	9·1	7·7

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received regarding the take-up of family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The take-up of family credit has been mentioned, in both Houses, during exchanges on the forthcoming increases in social security benefits, but otherwise few representations have been received recently.

Invalid Care Allowance

70. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of the invalid care allowance in the area covered by the Dod street Department of Social Security office in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Scott: At 5 February 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of people in receipt of invalid care allowance in the area covered by the Department's office in Dod street was 146.

National Insurance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women and men earned below the national insurance threshold in each of the last 15 years; and how many earned over it.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table gives the numbers who paid employees' class 1 national insurance contributions at some time during the years from April 1975, when earnings related contributions with a lower earnings limit were first introduced, until 1986-87 which is the latest year for which final figures are available. The fact that some class 1 contributions were paid means that the person concerned must have had earnings which reached the lower earnings limit on at least one occasion during the year.

Year	*Weekly lower earnings limit*	*Number who paid Class 1 national insurance contributions (thousands)*	
	£	*Women*	*Men*
1975-76	11·00	9,176	14,534
1976-77	13·00	9,325	14,808
1977-78	15·00	9,412	14,793
1978-79	17·50	9,412	14,729
1979-80	19·50	9,646	14,777
1980-81	23·00	9,267	14,259
1981-82	27·00	8,935	13,649
1982-83	29·50	8,793	13,288
1983-84	32·50	8,744	13,102
1984-85	34·00	8,885	12,968
1985-86	35·50	9,156	13,016
1986-87	38·00	9,316	12,987

The figures are for contributions paid in the United Kingdom except for 1975-76 which refer to Great Britain only.

I regret that detailed information on the numbers of employees earning less than the various lower earnings limits over the above period is not available. However, for the years 1984-85 onwards it is estimated that in any week about 2·75 million people earned below the lower earnings limit of which about a quarter were men. Up to 0·5 million of these people would be only temporarily below the lower earnings limit by virtue of a reduction in their normal earnings for example due to sickness.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham on 12 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *584*, what is the reason for the £3·48 fall in the real weekly value of national insurance child dependency addition plus child benefit for widowed mothers between 1979 and 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Child benefit legislation specifically provides for the rate of child benefit to be taken into account when determining the levels of child dependency increase payable with national insurance benefits. The method of doing this is to calculate what the child dependency increase would be if the general uprating percentage were applied, and then to deduct any cash increase in child benefit. It applies to all child dependency increases not only those payable with widowed mothers allowance.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in a table the national insurance contribution liability of *(a)* contracted-in employees through class 1, *(b)* contracted-out employees through class 1, *(c)* self-employed people through class 2 contributions, *(d)* self-employed people through class 4 contributions, showing separately the total effects at tax relief available on class 4, the amount due in the year, and the weekly equivalent for the latest available year for a single person earning, and assuming their income remains constant throughout the year, (i) quarter average male earnings, (ii) half average male earnings, (iii) average male earnings, (iv) one and a half average male earnings, (v) two times average male earnings, (vi) five times average male earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table shows class 1, 2 and 4 liability for 1989-90 under the headings requested. With the exception of the position when earnings attract tax at the 40 per cent. rate, the contributions shown have been calculated by reference to the average earnings of all male employees as at April 1989 as given in "Social Security Statistics 1989". The same average has been used for both class 1 and class 2-4 calculations.

	½	¾	*1*	*1½*	*2*	*40 per cent. rate applies*	*5*
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Primary (employee's) class 1 contributions not contracted-out rates							
April to September weekly rates	3·37	12·13	24·25	29·25	29·25	29·25	29·25
October to March weekly rates	3·05	9·12	21·24	26·24	26·24	26·24	26·24
Total for the year	166·92	552·50	1,182·74	1,442·74	1,442·74	1,442·74	1,442·74
Primary (employee's) class 1 contributions contracted-out rates							
April to September weekly rates	2·88	10·29	19·72	23·61	23·61	23·61	23·61
October to March weekly rates	2·57	7·28	16·71	20·60	20·60	20·60	20·60
Total for the year	141·70	456·82	947·18	1,149·46	1,149·46	1,149·46	1,149·46
Class 2 (self-employed) contributions							
Weekly rate	4·25	4·25	4·25	4·25	4·25	4·25	4·25
Total for the year	221·00	221·00	221·00	221·00	221·00	221·00	221·00

	¼	½	1	1½	2	40 per cent. rate applies	5
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Class 4 contributions							
Total liability on profits							
For the year	Nil	123·29	564·73	746·55	746·55	746·55	746·55
Weekly equivalent	n/a	2·37	10·86	14·36	14·36	14·36	14·36
Liability allowing for tax relief							
For the year	n/a	107·88	494·14	653·23	597·24	653·08	597·24
Weekly equivalent	n/a	2·07	9·50	12·56	11·48	12·55	11·48

Widowers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the support his Department offers to widowers of working age with young families in the immediate bereavement period and later.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are a wide range of social security benefits available to widowers of working age with young families. In addition to child benefit and one-parent benefit many widowers continue in employment in the period after bereavement and depending on their level of income can receive family credit and housing benefit. Widowers who are not employed can, depending on their circumstances, receive income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Sick Pay

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations underlie the decision not to pay statutory sick pay and sickness benefit for the first three days of any absence from work due to illness.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No payment for the first three days of absence from work due to illness has been made since 1971. We consider that a person's own resources should normally be sufficient to cover the first three days of illness. But where this is not so, income support is available as appropriate. If a period of entitlement to sickness benefit or statutory sick pay occurs not more than eight weeks after a previous such period has ended and the earlier spell lasted for at least four days, then payment is made from the first day of incapacity of the second or subsequent spell.

Vibration White Finger

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the date at which changed arrangements were introduced in regard to the compensation of claimants suffering from the vibration white finger condition.

Mr. Scott: No.

Mr. Charles Haggarty

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, if he will take steps to provide Mr. Charles Haggarty of Marloch avenue, Port Glasgow, with an ex-gratia payment pending the revision of guidance to adjudication officers following the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the case of McKiernon *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Scott: No. We are still considering the full implications of the judgment in the case of McKiernon. The chief adjudication officer has still to issue guidance on cases which have been disallowed under regulation 25 of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) Regulations since the date of that judgment.

Travelling Expenses

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for travelling expenses to enable claimants to visit relatives in hospital were granted and how many refused between May 1989 and November 1989.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 29 January at column *34*.

Area Computer Centres

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date and where, the invitations to tender to run the area computer centres at *(a)* Norcross, Lancashire and *(b)* Livingston were published.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not the practice to publish invitations to tender for service contracts such as those for the area computer centres at *(a)* Norcross, Lancashire and *(b)* Livingston.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the additional amounts families living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are paying from their weekly benefit to pay for heating, hot water, breakfasts and other charges.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Families living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are able to claim housing benefit to help towards accommodation charges and income support to help towards other expenses. Charges for accommodation and other services will vary in individual cases.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will reply to a letter from Field Lane homeless families centre of 22 September 1989 on behalf of organisations working with homeless families in London concerning families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and changes in benefit.

Mr. Newton: I have replied today.

Blind People

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of the Royal National Institute for the Blind and other blind people's organisations; and whether he discussed the White Paper "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People".

Mr. Scott: On 13 December 1989 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met representatives of the Disability Benefits Consortium which includes the Royal National Institute for the Blind and which represents other blind people's organisations. We shall soon be meeting the Disability Benefits Consortium again to listen to its views on the Command Paper "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People". I will also separately be meeting representatives of the National Federation of the Blind and Disabled of the United Kingdom.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of claims paid, the average length and total cost of income support paid to students in each region and in Great Britain during the summer vacation of 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table.

Region	*Number of claims*	*Average length weeks*	*Benefit cost £*
North East	25,656	6·15	4,701,900
London North	12,503	4·97	2,125,366
Wales and South West	17,927	6·09	3,431,654
Midlands	21,593	5·91	3,729,968
North West	22,754	6·69	4,370,808
Scotland	26,560	7·34	4,824,092
London South	10,170	5·71	1,955,010
Totals	135,163	6 weeks	25,138,798

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of claims paid, the average length, and total cost of housing benefit paid to students in each region and in Great Britain during the summer vacation of 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information is not available in the form requested. However, management information returns for May 1988 show that there were 78,000 housing benefit claims from students current at that time. The average amount of housing benefit in payment was £7·80.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of claims paid, the average length, and total cost of unemployment benefit paid to students in each region and in Great Britain during the summer vacation of 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that this information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received on the level of charges in private residential homes.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the level of benefits paid to people in residential nursing homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) earlier today.

DEFENCE

Army Housing (New Forest)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will review his policy on selling Army housing in the New Forest district council area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. Surplus Army quarters suitable for sale will be disposed of as expeditiously as possible by the most appropriate method.

Aldermaston

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if contractorisation at AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield will apply to Trident warhead component production and assembly.

Mr. Neubert: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House on 5 December 1989, Vol. 163, column 165, the Government plan to introduce full contractorisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment in its entirety, including warhead component production and assembly.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes in working practices are being considered at AWE Aldermaston, in the light of the Gardener report; and whether they will have an effect on the production schedule of the Trident missile warhead.

Mr. Neubert: Within AWE, radiation exposures continue to be authorised only on the basis that they are justified, comply with statutory limits and are as low as reasonably practicable. In 1988, the average whole body occupational exposure for radiation workers at AWE was 0·7 milliSieverts. The general public in the United Kingdom receives typically 2 mSv per year from natural and background sources. Trident warhead production remains on schedule to meet the in-service date of the mid-1990s.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of staff turnover, as a percentage, at AWE Aldermaston in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Neubert: Intake and outflow of staff at the Atomic Weapons Establishment have been approximately equal at about 800 over the 12-month period to 1 February 1990. To express this as a percentage would reveal total AWE staff numbers, which would be undesirable on security grounds.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the effect on the cost of the Trident production programme of contractorisation at AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield.

Mr. Neubert: The cost of introducing full contractor operation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment will be determined by competition. In the longer term, this cost should be offset by increased efficiency and improved utilisation of resources. It is too early to say how any net changes in costs would be attributed to individual programmes.

"Programme for Promoting Nuclear Non Proliferation"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his departmental library receives the newsbrief from the "Programme For Promoting Nuclear Non Proliferation".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Chemical Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he chemical warfare defence establishment at Porton Down has offered any technological or scientific assistance to the United States Department of Defence to destroy the United States stockpile of chemical weapon agents and nerve gases.

Mr. Neubert: As we have made abundantly clear, the United Kingdom does not possess, produce or seek to acquire any chemical or biological weapons; we abandoned our possession and production of such weapons in the late 1950s. The work carried out at the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down, is totally oriented towards protective measures; there is absolutely no offensive intent.

The United Kingdom, through the chemical defence establishment, has collaborated over many years with the United States and our other NATO allies on approaches to the safe destruction of chemical agents and weapons, and we fully expect this collaboration and sharing of techniques to continue, as an agreement on a global ban on chemical weapons is one of NATO's arms control priorities.

Princess Mary's RAF Hospital

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of Princess Mary's Royal Air Force hospital, Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is currently undertaking a study into the number and location of service hospitals required in the United Kingdom. The outcome of this review will be known later this year.

RAF Pilots (Health)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the frequency of tests for heart conditions for Royal Air Force pilots.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All RAF aircrew are given an electrocardiogram test (ECG) on entry and thereafter, as a routine matter, an annual medical examination. Aircrew aged between 25 and 30 years old are given an ECG every five years; those aged over 30 every two years and those aged over 40 annually. Additionally, aircrew are given a chest X-ray on entry, which is repeated when they are 50 years of age. There are also annual blood tests.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the number of Royal Air Force aircraft crashes which were attributed to pilot illness during the last 20 years.

Mr. Neubert: Since 1 January 1970 there have been three RAF aircraft accidents in which the aircraft crashed and which could be attributed to pilot illness.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Neubert: Equal opportunities is featured on seven management training courses covering issues such as recruitment, personnel management, staff appraisal and selection interviewing. To establish what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters have received such training would involve a disproportionate amount of time and effort.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Neubert: The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, have encouraged the development of a range of high-quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made in the roles played by women in each of the armed forces in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the last decade the role of women in all three services has expanded considerably. Members of the WRNS, WRAC and WRAF can now be armed, for defensive purposes.

I recently announced the introduction of sea service for members of the WRNS. We have also widened the opportunities for employment of members of the WRAC to include all posts except those which would deploy into forward areas in war, and women are now more closely integrated into the corps and regiments that employ them. In the RAF, women may now serve as aircrew in all capacities except those which have a direct combat role.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child-care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Neubert: We are planning to open nurseries for the children of MOD civil servants in central London and at the Royal Aerospace Establishment, Farnborough.

Consideration is being given to running holiday play schemes in other parts of the country and the MOD has participated in the Westminster holiday play scheme.

MOD units outside London are being encouraged to consider provision of suitable child-care for their area and we are currently surveying staff to determine demand for a ring of Civil Service nurseries around London for the children of civil servants who work on the periphery of or commute into London.

Costs will be met by combination of departmental subsidy and charges to parents, the levels of which are yet to be determined.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what duties, in each of the armed forces, women are currently prohibited from carrying out.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Decisions taken over the last year will lead to a considerable expansion in the types of employment open to women in all three services. However, there will remain a number of areas of employment from which it is at present intended that women will continue to be excluded. The principal exceptions are that women in the Army and the RAF will not be employed in direct combat duties and that women in the Royal Navy will not be employed in the submarine service, in the Royal Marines or as aircrew. We are, however, considering whether it is possible to reduce further the areas of work from which women are excluded.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Neubert: Grade 5.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Neubert: All applicants to join the Ministry of Defence and all members of staff are treated equally for employment and advancement on the basis of their ability, qualifications and suitability for work. Particular measures taken to promote equality of opportunity include flexible upper age limits for recruitment and promotion, the introduction of five-year career breaks for people with domestic responsibilities, child care provision, use of special leave during school holidays, a trial working from home scheme, reinstatement and flexible working patterns including part-time posts and job-sharing, and women-only management development training courses.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Neubert: The figures are as follows:

Grade	*Per cent.*
Seven	4·1
Six	1·4
Five	3·5
Four	0·0
Three	1·6
Two	0·0
One	0·0

Greenham Common (Arrests)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women have been arrested under the RAF Greenham Common byelaws since they were introduced; how many women were charged; and how many were convicted.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the byelaws came into operation on 1 April 1985 2,448 arrests have been made, and in 1,503 of these cases the person arrested has been charged. There have been 812 convictions.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Neubert: Sexual harassment is not tolerated in the Ministry of Defence. Instructions have been issued to line managers and staff setting out the Departments policy and guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual harassment. Complaints are recorded centrally only if they result in a disciplinary penalty. In the past five years there have been 12 such cases and the penalties have ranged from dismissal to reprimands.

Pin-ups

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Neubert: An instruction was issued in May 1988 requiring the removal from Civil Service premises of any material of a sexual nature which might cause offence.

Radiation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average radiation dose, whole body *(a)* received by nuclear submarine personnel, *(b)* reported by the Central Electricity Generating Board nationally and *(c)* reported by the Central Electricity Generating Board at the Sellafield nuclear power plant, for each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For figures relating to nuclear submarine personnel for the years 1978 to 1988 I refer the hon. Member to my written answers to him of 2 May 1989, *Official Report*, column *62*, and 20 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *478*. The average individual radiation dose in 1989 was 1·69 milliSieverts.

I will ask my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) to write to Nuclear Electric Ltd. and British Nuclear Fuels plc, the operators of Sellafield, to obtain the information requested in parts *(b)* and *(c)* of the question.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum radiation dose, rounded to the nearest milliSievert, received by any nuclear submariner in one year during the last decade.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The maximum recorded individual radiation dose to a Royal Navy submariner in any one year during the last 10 years as 50·96 milliSieverts, in 1980.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum total radiation dose received by any nuclear submariner over any period, or number of periods, spent as a classified radiation worker working for the Royal Navy aboard British nuclear submarines; and whether or not such an individual or individuals are still working as classified radiation workers within Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Data are readily available only for personnel who have ceased radiation work since 1979.

The maximum total radiation dose recorded for any member of the Royal Navy who ceased radiation work since 1979 is 201·98 milliSieverts. This cumulative radiation dose was accrued over the period September 1969 to October 1987, and is the only example shown on available records of a total cumulative dose in excess of 200 milliSieverts. A further 39 Royal Navy personnel are recorded as having cumulative doses in excess of 100 milliSieverts.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the radiation exposure limit for classified persons set by the Ionising Radiations Regulations for maximum annual dose, cumulative year-on-year dose and total dose over a lifetime.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 state the following. The dose limit for the whole body resulting from exposure to the whole or part of the body, being the sum of the following dose quantities resulting from exposure to ionising radiation, namely the effective dose equivalent from external radiation and the committed effective dose equivalent from that year's intake of radionuclides, shall in any calendar year be:

(a) for employees aged 18 years or over,	50mSV
(b) for trainees aged under 18 years,	15mSV
(c) for any other person.	5mSV

There are no limits on cumulative or total lifetime dose other than those implicit in the annual dose limits.

The regulations also include dose limits for individual organs and tissues, the lens of the eye, the abdomen of a woman of reproductive capacity and the abdomen of a pregnant woman. For details of these I refer the hon. Member to schedule 1, parts II, III, IV and V on pages 35 and 36 of IRR85, issued by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and available in the House of Commons Library.

Forest Moor Base

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the Forest Moor royal naval base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is a naval communications establishment.

Running Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current average annual running cost of an operational *(a)* type 23 frigate, *(b)* type 22 frigate, *(c)* type 21 frigate, *(d)* Leander class frigate, *(e)* type 42 destroyer, *(f)* type 82 destroyer, *(g)* anti-submarine warfare carrier, *(h)* assault ship, *(i)* type 2400 submarine, *(j)* Oberon class submarine, *(k)* Fleet class submarine, *(l)* Ton class minesweeper, *(m)* Ton class minehunter and *(n)* Hunt class minehunter;

(2) what is the current average annual running cost of a squadron of *(a)* Sea Harrier aircraft, *(b)* Sea King HAS 5 anti-submarine helicopters, *(c)* Lynx HAS 2/3 anti-submarine helicopters, *(d)* Sea King AEW 2 helicopters and *(e)* Sea King HC 4 commando assault helicopters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 26 February 1990]*: The current average annual running costs (at financial year 1988-89 prices) of the following Royal Navy vessels are:

		£ million
(a)	Type 23 frigate	5·3
(b)	Type 22 frigate	5·6
(c)	Type 21 frigate	3·9
(d)	Leander class frigate	4·2
(e)	Type 42 destroyer	6·0
(f)	Type 82 destroyer	6·5
(g)	Anti-submarine warfare carrier	21·4
(h)	Assault ship	9·0
(i)	Type 2400 submarine	3·4
(j)	Oberon class submarine	2·4
(k)	Fleet submarine	4·4
(l)	Ton class minesweeper	1·0
(m)	Ton class minehunter	0·5
(n)	Hunt class minehunter	0·9

The current average annual running costs (at financial year 1988-89 prices) of a squadron of the following Royal Navy aircraft are:

		£ million
(a)	Sea Harrier	0·8
(b)	Sea King HAS 5/6 anti-submarine helicopter	1·6
(c)	Lynx (including all operational Lynx helicopters)	0·5
(d)	Sea King AEW 2	0·6
(e)	Sea King HC4 commando assault helicopter	0·9

These costs include personnel, fuel, spares and so on, and administrative support services, but exclude new construction, capital equipment and refit-repair costs.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 6 March 1990

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has reached a decision on the future of the wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have decided not to proceed with the abolition of the councils for the present. However, the consultation exercise showed that our concern about their adverse effects is widely shared by employers, who have confirmed the Government's view that the system should have no permanent place in the labour market. I therefore intend to keep its operation under close review.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the total number of unemployed and *(b)* the total number of long-term unemployed for each of the months between July 1986 and December 1989 inclusive for each of the standard regions, Scotland, Wales and Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]*: As the information requested is detailed and lengthy, I will write to the hon. Member.

Business Incentives (Women)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what incentives his Department promotes for women wishing to start up their own business.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: The Government's policy is to create a beneficial climate for small businesses generally, mainly by encouraging conditions of fair competition and minimising regulation, and by providing a complementary range of fiscal, financial and advisory measures.

My own Department's services include the development of a wide range of business training, the loan guarantee scheme, the enterprise allowance scheme in which over one third of participants are now women, and the small firms service. All these opportunities are open equally to men and women. My Department is keen to encourage women to set up in business, and part-funded a study into the barriers faced by female entrepreneurs conducted by the Scottish Enterprise Foundation, published in November 1988. Following that, the Training Agency has invited organisations to compete for a contract to develop enterprise training for women within employment training.

Women are increasingly taking advantage of enterprise opportunities. Between 1979 and 1988 the number of self-employed women in the United Kingdom more than doubled, compared with an increase of just under 50 per cent. for self-employed men.

TRANSPORT

Coastal Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken by his Department to develop national policies for coastal protection and sea defence work in respect of the threat to ports from erosion of the coastline and the rise in sea levels.

Mr. McLoughlin: The main policy interest relating to coast protection and sea defence work rests, in England, with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and elsewhere with the territorial Departments. In specific cases where problems arise with respect to ports it is normally for the harbour authorities to assess the need for work and to take such action as may be necessary.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current financial targets and limits set by him which apply to Network SouthEast and the assumptions as to the increase in passenger fares made in connection with their plans for future revenue and capital expenditure.

Mr. Portillo: For 1989-90 the British Railways Board's external financing limit is now £635 million. The PSO cash limit is, at present, £496 million. The EFL applies to BR as a whole and the PSO limit to supported sectors. They are not broken down by sector.

In the medium term, the board has set Network SouthEast the objective of reducing its grant requirement to zero in 1992-93. This was endorsed by my right hon. Friend in his letter to Sir Robert Reid of 20 December, which set out BR's objectives for the next three years. Over the same period, planned investment will amount to £1·2 billion—an increase of 30 per cent. in real terms over the previous three-year period. According to BR's own plans, on which the medium-term objectives are based, fares on NSE are likely to rise by less than 10 per cent. in real terms over the next three years.

Air-conditioned Rolling Stock

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of existing rolling stock on British Rail and the London Underground have air conditioning; and what percentage of the new rolling stock will have it.

Mr. Portillo: The figures for BR are given in the table below.

	Percentage of fleet with air conditioning		*[1]Percentage of planned future rolling stock with air conditioning*
	1989-90	*1993-94*	
InterCity	85	[2]100	100
Network SouthEast	2	15	50
Provincial	2	24	75

[1]Taken from British Rail's 1989 corporate plan. For Network SouthEast the figure includes all rolling stock that will have been ordered by March 1995.
[2]Percentage of carriages in regular, all year round service. A very small number of vehicles used for charter will not be air conditioned.

London Underground has no air conditioned rolling stock, and none of the planned new rolling stock will have air conditioning.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the proper equipment is available and arrangements made to ensure that when a vehicle overturns on the Severn bridge quick remedial action can be taken.

Mr. Atkins: The equipment necessary for the recovery and removal of overturned vehicles on the Severn crossing is already available. High winds are almost invariably the cause of vehicles overturning on the crossing and these winds also impede and delay vehicle recovery.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the reason for the closure of the Severn bridge on 26 February; and for how long traffic was disrupted.

Mr. Atkins: A high-sided heavy goods vehicle overturned in high winds on the westbound carriageway of the Severn crossing at approximately 3.30 am on 26 February. The vehicle came to rest across the central reservation, spilling diesel fuel on both carriageways. As a result, both carriageways were closed to traffic. The vehicle and spillage was cleared by early afternoon, but with winds gusting to 70 knots, it was not considered safe to reopen the crossing until 4.50 pm. High-sided vehicles were banned until 3.30 am the following day.

Newbury Bypass

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decision he has reached about the route for the Newbury bypass.

Mr. Atkins: The Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment are still considering the inspector's report on the A34 Newbury bypass public inquiry. We would hope to be able to announce their joint decision during the spring.

Roads, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new road building funded by his Department is planned for the city of Liverpool for the next decade.

Mr. Atkins: There are none of our trunk roads within Liverpool. We support local authority spending on some of their more important roads through transport supplementary grant (TSG), currently paid at 50 per cent. of accepted expenditure. In Liverpool we are at present supporting phases of the Park road relief road and the Great Howard street improvement. It is for the city council to settle its forward programme and the schemes to be included in future annual bids for TSG.

Roads (Congestion)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the measures he has taken to reduce congestion on the roads.

Mr. Atkins: Last year we announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" a doubling of the trunk road programme. Our proposals to add some 2,700 miles of new or improved road to the trunk road network will make a significant impact on congestion on major inter-urban routes. Plans for over 150 bypasses will remove through traffic from towns and villages. In city centres better traffic management measures, parking controls and improvements to public transport, including the development of new facilities such as light rail systems will contribute towards reducing congestion.

Full details of the trunk road programme are contained in the roads report "Trunk Roads, England—Into the 1990s", published on 20 February. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Traffic Information

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to improve access to motorists of up-to-date traffic information by means of radio.

Mr. Atkins: We have held discussions with the BBC, AA and others involved in the provision of travel information about ways of improving the availability and reliability of information through better arrangements for its collection, co-ordination and dissemination. The Department is contributing to a trial by the BBC of radio data systems, a newly developed system to allow improved dissemination of travel information by radio.

A1 (Fatal Accidents)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatal accidents have occurred between Doncaster and Scotland on the A1 in each of the past five years.

Mr. Atkins: Figures available are for the A1 and A1(M) between the Scottish border and the border of Doncaster metropolitan district, which is approximately five miles south of Doncaster. In 1984, there were 22 fatal accidents. The figures for successive years are 19 fatal accidents in 1985, 38 in 1986, 25 in 1987 and 23 in 1988. The table shows fatal accidents for A1 and A1(M) separately and the resulting fatal casualties.

Fatal accidents and casualties on the A1 and A1(M) between Doncaster and Scotland, 1984 to 1988

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Fatal accidents					
A1	21	14	31	20	22
A1(M)	1	5	7	5	1
TOTAL	22	19	38	25	23
Fatal casualties					
A1	24	16	45	22	28
A1(M)	2	5	7	5	3
TOTAL	26	21	52	27	31

Environmental Pressure Groups

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meeting with environmental pressure groups on 23 February.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend met representatives of Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth, the Council for

the Protection of Rural England, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation on 23 February. He exchanged views with these organisations on a wide range of transport and environmental issues, and hopes to have further meetings with them.

Vehicle Emissions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what policies he has to develop measures to improve driver efficiency as part of Her Majesty's Government's policy to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Atkins: Pollution emitted by road vehicles is related to fuel consumption. My Department regularly issues a booklet about the fuel consumption of new cars which also advises motorists on how to save fuel when driving. We are considering what further measures are necessary to encourage driver efficiency.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies are being undertaken into the development of advanced catalytic converter technology for turbo-diesel engines by the transport road research laboratory.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* None at present. Industry has its own longstanding development programmes in this field. These will be furthered by the £2·3 million joint venture programme between Government and a consortium of United Kingdom companies, directed towards cleaning up vehicle exhaust emissions, announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Enterprise on 15 February.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for testing the effectiveness of motor vehicle emission control devices once fitted and in use.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* Our proposed amendments to the Construction and Use Regulations include a requirement for the user of a vehicle to keep the engine in tune and any emission control equipment in working order. This can be checked by most garages. We are also considering whether changes are needed in the existing annual testing schemes and roadside spot checks of exhaust condition.

Ship Registers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce incentives to United Kingdom shipping companies to stop them registering their shipping in other countries.

Mr. McLoughlin: No.

Radioactive Materials (Ports)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list by year for the last 10 years *(a)* the sources and *(b)* the destinations, of radioactive material (i) imported and (ii) exported, through the ports of Immingham and Hull;

(2) if he will list by year for the last 10 years how many tonnes of radioactive material were *(a)* imported and *(b)* exported through the ports of (i) Barrow, (ii) Dover, (iii) Felixstowe, (iv) Harwich, (v) Liverpool, (vi) Portsmouth, (vii) Southampton and (viii) Workington, and in each case what method of transport was used to convey the material to or from the port.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *491*.

Tyres

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he will issue to local authority trading standards departments in relation to current offences alleged to have been committed under sections 10 and 12 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 with respect to the alleged breach of regulation 4 of the Motor Vehicles Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1984 in the light of the acceptance and imminent introduction of BS AU144C 1988 retread car and commercial vehicle tyre specifications.

Mr. Atkins: We shall consult on proposed amendments to the regulations, which will include the introduction of the BS AU 1440 requirements, later this year. As usual, the trading standards authorities, who are responsible for enforcement, will be included in the consultation.

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to replace the British Standards AU144B 1977 specification for retreaded car and commercial vehicle tyres with British Standard AU144C 1988 requirement, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* I shall be consulting on amendments to the Motor Vehicles (Tyre Safety) Regulations 1984 later this year. The amendments will include the change proposed by my hon. Friend.

Minibuses

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what documentation and tests are to be required after 1992 for a person to be qualified to drive a minibus in the United Kingdom and other European Community countries; and what are the present arrangements.

Mr. Atkins: Minibuses with up to 17 seats that are not used for hire or reward may be driven in the United Kingdom by holders of full ordinary licences who are over 21 years of age. Younger drivers are also allowed to drive minibuses in closely defined circumstances. In order to drive these vehicles in other European Community member states, drivers must obtain a certificate of driving experience from the local traffic area office.

Proposals for a second directive on the driving licence, as published by the European Commission, would require new drivers of minibuses to take a second test and meet tougher health standards. The United Kingdom has been pressing for the retention of the present arrangements. Useful progress has been made in direct discussions with Commission officials. Details of the modifications agreed with the Commission were announced in the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 21 July 1989, *Official Report*, column *336*. There is still a good deal of negotiation ahead before the proposals are finalised. Any changes arising from the directive are unlikely to be in place by 1992.

M3 Extension

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what impact the recently approved extension of the M3 through Twyford Down near Winchester, Hampshire, will have on the natural landscape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The impact on the landscape of the Department of Transport's proposals for this section of the M3 motorway is set out at length in the letter conveying the decisions of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment on the reports of the two independent inspectors who conducted the public inquiries. I am sending the hon. and learned Gentleman a copy of the letter and arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Beach Pollution (Sussex)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *237*, regarding the MV Fathulkhair, (1) whether he was informed by the French authorities of the loss of the vessel's dangerous cargo and potential risk on British beaches; when he first knew of the problem; whether the other dangerous chemicals found were on the MV Fathulkhair's manifest; and what information he has on whether the initial stowage and subsequent securing in Cherbourg were in conformity with Merchant Shipping Regulations;

(2) where the MV Fathulkhair is registered; when the master of the vessel notified the authorities in Cherbourg of the loss of dangerous cargo; when the French authorities notified his Department of the danger; and if he is satisfied that the communications arrangements are adequate to warn of such dangers.

Mr. McLoughlin: As explained in my answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *237*, the MV Fathulkhair is registered in Qatar. I understand that the loss of dangerous goods was not reported by the master to the French authorities although the vessel at one time put back into Cherbourg to re-secure and survey cargo. Had the loss been so reported I am satisfied that the French authorities would have notified my Department's marine pollution control unit (MPCU) of the potential risk to British beaches under a longstanding bilateral agreement for co-operation in dealing with pollution in the Channel —Mancheplan.

These arrangements have worked well in other recent incidents in the Channel involving the loss of dangerous goods, such as the Perintis and the Murree. Within the framework of Mancheplan there are also twice-yearly meetings between the MPCU and its counterparts in Cherbourg and annual counter-pollution exercises are held to ensure that communications are both speedy and effective.

On this occasion, the first my Department knew of the danger on British beaches was when a canister of potassium cyanide was reported on the morning of 21 February to Sussex police who immediately informed Her Majesty's Coastguard. The MPCU was subsequently able to determine that this had been shipped on the MV Fathulkhair and was then advised by the shipping agent of other dangerous cargo which had been lost overboard from the vessel. This information was passed by the MPCU to the French authorities and to all United Kingdom coastal local authorities which might be affected. Other dangerous chemicals found on beaches on 21 February and on succeeding days are consistent with those reported by the shipping agent as being lost from MV Fathulkhair. Marine surveyors of my Department are investigating to see whether cargo loaded on board the MV Fathulkhair at Sheerness was stowed in conformity with merchant shipping regulations. Any subsequent re-securing of the cargo in Cherbourg is of course a matter for the competent French authorities.

Lowland Airports

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has concluded his review of Scottish lowland airports policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I have now concluded my consideration of the views put in the over 1,100 submissions received during the recent consultation. I was much impressed by the scale and quality of the response, and I am glad to have been able to consider the issues against the background of this very full expression of Scottish opinion.

I believe it is right in principle for Government to intervene in the operation of the aviation market only to the extent and when circumstances make it necessary. My intention in ordering the consultation was to determine whether to maintain a special policy for the lowland airports, or to adopt the less restrictive approach which applies more generally in the United Kingdom. I have concluded, in close consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, that the interests of Scotland generally and of the users and providers of air services in Scotland are best served by allowing each of the lowland airports to handle the traffic they are able to attract, subject of course to the licences held by airlines, to international air service agreements and to the physical capabilities of the airports. I shall not, therefore, be making fresh traffic distribution rules for the lowland airports. I did not find that there was a persuasive argument for construction of another airport in Scotland.

The benefits to Scotland that can be expected to flow from this, and the rate at which those benefits will be become manifest, are necessarily difficult to state with precision. Much depends on the response of the industry and of users to the additional opportunities that a more liberal policy will open up: already two airlines have announced proposals for new services between Glasgow and the United States of America. It is the firm belief of almost all those well placed to take an informed view that the policy of confining long-haul services to Prestwick has hampered Scotland's economic development and that a less restrictive approach could be expected to enhance business efficiency and help encourage inward investment. I am myself clear that airlines' ability to respond flexibly to the needs of users is very important.

I recognise and regret that the change in policy is likely to have an adverse impact on local Ayrshire employment. However my right hon. and learned Friend and I are confident that this will be more than offset by wider benefits to Scotland as a whole, and in the meantime I welcome BAA's firm policy of making no forced redundancies at Prestwick.

I am conscious of the concern on safety grounds at the prospect of additional traffic at Glasgow and Edinburgh.

I should stress that there is no question of any unsafe operations being permitted at either airport. A statutory responsibility for the safety of civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. Objectivity in assessing safety standards is one of the key elements which take the regulation of aviation safety out of the commercial market place as far as is humanly possible. Thus, while the length of Glasgow's runway might impose a commercial penalty —which would be a matter for the airlines—there is no question of safety standards being compromised. Much higher levels of air traffic than are envisaged at Glasgow are already present at, for example, Heathrow and Manchester, airports also located in urban areas.

There is concern, too, about additional noise and vibration at Glasgow and Edinburgh that an increase in traffic may bring. Responsibility for noise control measures at these airports rests with BAA as airport operator, and I am satisfied that this arrangement should continue, as indeed it does at all United Kingdom airports outside the London system. A number of noise abatement measures are already in place at Glasgow and Edinburgh, and I am asking the chairman of the BAA to ensure that these are kept under review.

It is suggested that the withdrawal of Prestwick's sole gateway status would lead to the airport's closure. BAA has said that it will move to a common tariff at Glasgow and Prestwick for long-haul traffic, allowing Prestwick to compete fairly. Although it believes that passenger services will nevertheless in due course transfer from Prestwick, the BAA has made clear its firm intention of keeping the airport open and of intensifying its marketing of its other facilities, notably for all-cargo operations. I welcome those intentions, because I know there is concern among some Scottish business interests for the future of air freight facilities in Scotland. I very much hope that BAA will be successful in realising Prestwick's advantages for all-cargo services. It starts from a strong position, such services having accounted for 38 per cent. of all air transport movements at Prestwick in 1988, and for 80 per cent. of cargo moved through the airport in 1988-89. With the continuation of cargo operations at Prestwick and the bellyhold capacity offered by any additional long-haul services at Glasgow and Edinburgh, I believe Scotland will continue to enjoy good air freight coverage.

Lowland Scotland is fortunate in having three fine airports. By extending freedom of choice, allowing the market to respond freely to the wishes of users, I am confident that each of the airports will be encouraged to realise its proper potential, to the benefit of Scotland as a whole.

Oil Tankers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the United Kingdom's preparedness to deal with an oil spill at sea has been reviewed in the light of recent tanker accidents.

Mr. McLoughlin: Contingency arrangements to deal with pollution at sea in United Kingdom waters are kept under constant review by the Department's marine pollution control unit (MPCU) which was set up in 1979 with specific responsibility to do so and to take charge of operations.

A thorough examination covering United Kingdom counterpollution responsibilities, communications and resources has been carried out. As a result of this the capability of the MPCU to deal with major oil spills is being increased by doubling its contracted aerial dispersant spraying capacity by the use of larger aircraft. The unit's ability to detect oil slicks at sea is also being doubled by increasing to two its complement of remote sensing aircraft, which are used to control and direct counterpollution operations. Additionally this enhanced remote sensing capability will be used to increase by more than 60 per cent. regular aerial surveillance patrols of United Kingdom waters to deter and detect ships making illegal operational discharges of oil. Overall spending in 1990-91 will depend on the number of incidents in the year but is expected to be of the order of £4 million.

Trunk Roads and Motorways

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the role of local authority agents in relation to the sections of the Department of Transport chapter of the Public Expenditure White Paper for 1990-91 to 1992-93 dealing with trunk roads and motorways, Cm.1007.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 2 March 1990]*: Under current agency arrangements it will fall in general to local highway authorities to manage maintenance of trunk roads on behalf of the Department. Authorities will also be responsible in general for designing and supervising the less expensive new construction schemes, normally those costing less than £1 million.

It is the Department's policy to use private firms of consultants, selected by competition, for design and supervision of major schemes. We are however prepared to employ an agent authority on such a scheme where this is justified for reasons such as invested knowledge, linkages with local road schemes, or traffic management considerations.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the proposed new regulations on road humps and other traffic calming measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 2 March 1990]*: My aim is for these regulations to come into force before Easter.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those authorities which have set a poll tax *(a)* below and *(b)* above the Government's assessed level.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 21 February, *Official Report*, column *741*.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in descending order of magnitude for each non-metropolitan county in England the percentage amount by which its 1990-91 standard spending assessment represented an increase or decrease from the comparable adjusted figure for the 1989-90 grant-related expenditure assessment.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: I will write to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, further to his replies of 27 February, *Official Report*, column *178*, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, concerning the average amount of Government contribution to local expenditure, he will now publish the information in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 23 February at column *929*.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) of 23 November 1989, *Official Report*, columns *16-17*, whether he intends the proposed country agencies of the Nature Conservancy Council to have responsibility for making nature reserve agreements under section 16 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. Amendments to the 1949 Act contained in paragraph 1(2) and (3) of schedule 6 to the Environmental Protection Bill which is currently before Parliament are intended to achieve this.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *245*, what is the maximum number of new members appointed to the Nature Conservancy Council or its predecessor bodies with effect from the same date; and on what date and on how many occasions there have been more than 18 members on the council.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: The maximum number of new members appointed to the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) with effect from the same date is 11 from 1 November 1973. From 1 April 1989 until 28 September 1989, there were 19 members on the council. On no other occasion have there been more than 18 members. Information on the NCC's predecessor bodies is not readily available.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many D and F grades were employed at TCS on 16 February; and how many had applied for early retirement or severance at that date.

Mr. Chope: On 16 February 1990, a total of 318 permanent of D and F grades were employed in TCS. At that date, 152 had applied for early retirement or severance.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often he met members of the privatisation unit of the Crown Suppliers in 1989.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend meets his officials as necessary.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often the Parliamentary Under-Secretary met members of the management buy-out team for the product supply services division and the buying agency of TCS in 1989.

Mr. Chope: I had one formal meeting with the management buy-out team for PSSD and the buying agency, to discuss its proposals.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he encourages managers from the buying agency of TCS to bid for their business separately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government welcome staff interest in bidding for the business of the Crown Suppliers. Managers of the buying agency of the Crown Suppliers are among those buy-out teams and outside organisations which have been invited to bid for the contract furnishing business, which consists of the product supply and services and the buying agency divisions of the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether in 1989 TCS received any advice about EEC directives on procurement.

Mr. Chope: Like other Government Departments, the Crown Suppliers receive advice from the Treasury on EC directives from time to time. In 1989, some 20 such papers were received.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of consultants employed by the Property Services Agency at DWO Teddington; and what was the total cost in 1989.

Mr. Chope: Five consultants were employed at the district works office at Teddington during the financial year 1989-90 at a cost of £177,000.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of consultants employed in place of in-house staff at DWO Westminster in 1989.

Mr. Chope: There were no consultants employed in place of in-house staff at DWO Westminster during 1989.

Hostel Rents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has given to local rent officers to ensure that nominal rent levels for hostels for single people do not vary widely from one area to another.

Mr. Chope: The Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989 lays down the basis on which rent officers assess the rents paid by, and accommodation occupied by, private tenants claiming housing benefit. The order broadly requires the rent officer to assess the claimant's rent by reference to the level of rents being paid for similar accommodation within the locality by tenants who are not in receipt of housing benefit. Advice on how rent officers might approach this task particularly in circumstances where no direct market evidence is available was included in a study of the private rented housing market commissioned by the Department from the consultants Price Waterhouse. Copies of that report were circulated to rent officers and placed in the Library in February 1989. We have not issued any specific guidance as to the assessment of hostel charges.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what mechanisms exist to *(a)* review the

level of nominal rent set by rent officers for single person hostels and *(b)* replace rent officers whose assessments are grossly out of line with reasonable rents.

Mr. Chope: Where a local authority is dissatisfied with the rent officer's determinations under the Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989, it can apply for the case to be redetermined by another rent officer, drawn from a different rent registration area. The redetermination will be made by reference to the same criteria as applied to the initial determination. The redetermining officer is normally required to seek the views of two other rent officers, neither of whom will have previously dealt with the case. Responsibility for the day-to-day management of the rent officer service in each registration area lies with the chief rent officer, but overall responsibility lies with the proper officer of the local authority concerned.

Westminster Cemeteries (Sale)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking in respect of the report by the district auditor on the sale by Westminster city council of three cemeteries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Action on the report is for the city council and the auditor to take. The auditor's findings are provisional and the council has until 30 March to make representations to him. The auditor will then decide whether to apply to the High Court for a declaration that the items in the accounts relating to the transactions are "contrary to law".

Environmental Initiatives

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce initiatives on *(a)* prevention of sea disposal of wastes, *(b)* reductions in atmospheric pollution from transport, *(c)* long-term monitored storage for radioactive waste, and *(d)* measures to combat the greenhouse effect at the next Council of European Environment Ministers in Brussels on 22 March.

Mr. Trippier: It is the sole prerogative of the Commission to put forward proposed measures for action by the European Community. Responsibility for setting the agenda for meetings of the Council of Ministers rests with the member state holding the Presidency of the Council, currently Ireland. Nevertheless I have asked the Presidency to consider a number of possible initiatives for consideration by the Environment Council on 22 March, including the Community's role in global action to tackle the greenhouse effect.

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out a table showing for each year since 1979 *(a)* the full-time, *(b)* the part-time and *(c)* the total staffing levels of Kirklees metropolitan council.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Kirklees metropolitan district council: Staffing levels at June

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
1979	10,678	7,734	18,412
1980	10,505	7,679	18,184
1981	[1] —	[1] —	[1] —
1982	10,206	8,231	18,437
1983	10,381	8,496	18,877
1984	10,587	8,107	18,694
1985	10,748	8,084	18,832
1986	11,440	8,507	19,947
1987	11,707	9,292	20,999
1988	11,808	9,954	21,762
1989	10,908	8,983	19,891

[1] Data not available.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the expenditure of Kirklees metropolitan council for each year since 1979 per head of population in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant 1989-90 price terms; what was the percentage increase in each year; and what was the percentage increase between 1979 and 1990;

(2) what was the expenditure of Kirklees metropolitan council for each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant 1989-90 price terms; what was the percentage increase in each year; and what was the percentage increase between 1979 and 1990.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

Net current expenditure

	Cash Terms £ million	*Real terms 1989-90 Prices [1] £ million*	*Year-on-year Percentage Change Cash terms*	*Real Terms*
1981-82	101·787	157·831	—	—
1982-83	112·024	162·009	10·1	2·6
1983-84	116·162	160·501	3·7	−0·9
1984-85	122·959	161·851	5·9	0·8
1985-86	132·523	165·548	7·8	2·3
1986-87 [2]	164·623	198·947	24·2	20·2
1987-88	178·736	205·117	8·6	3·1
1988-89	196·764	210·537	10·1	2·6
1989-90	212·809	212·809	8·2	1·1
1981-82 to 1989-90			109·1	34·8
1981-82	270	419	—	—
1982-83	297	430	10·0	2·6
1983-84	308	425	3·7	−1·2
1984-85	326	429	5·8	0·9
1985-86	352	439	8·0	2·3

	Cash Terms £ million	*Real terms 1989-90 Prices [1] £ million*	*Year-on-year Percentage Change Cash terms*	*Real Terms*
1986-87[2]	437	528	24·1	20·3
1987-88	476	546	8·9	3·4
1988-89	524	561	10·1	2·7
1989-90	567	567	8·2	1·1
1981-82 to 1989-90			110·0	35·3

[1] Using the GDP deflator to convert from cash values to constant prices.
[2] Metropolitan county councils were abolished on 31 March 1986 and their functions transferred to metropolitan districts.
[3] Population figures used to derive per capita values are latest available Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year estimates of total population.

Major Developments (Design)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his policy in relation to the design of major development proposals.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government have advised local planning authorities, in circular 22/80, confirmed by circular 31/85, and in planning policy guidance note No. 1, that they should not seek to impose their tastes on developers simply because they believe them to be superior. Judgments about external design are essentially subjective, and I have seen no evidence that a more interventionist approach by local authorities would result in improved standards overall. Indeed, there is a risk that attempts to compromise between differing aesthetic judgments may produce bland buildings which satisfy no one.

Accordingly, where they consider it essential to refuse planning permission or to impose conditions related to design, local planning authorities should ensure that the grounds for refusal or for conditions relate to relevant planning issues such as the density and bulk of the development and its compatibility with its surroundings. This may include, in sensitive areas, the use of materials appropriate to the locality. Such control of external appearance may be particularly important where development proposals affect national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, conservation areas, or the setting of important historic landmarks. Authorities should in general confine their concern to those aspects of design which are significant for the aesthetic quality of the area. Only exceptionally should they control design details, if the sensitive character of the area or the particular building justifies it. Alterations to buildings of special architectural or historic interest are controlled through listed building consent procedures, for similar reasons.

Although I have no plans to impose further measures of aesthetic control, I am deeply concerned to promote good design. My concern relates particularly to the standard of planning applications made for major developments. I hope that developers will bring forward schemes which will make a major contribution to the architectural fabric of the country in the long term.

Pursuit of the highest architectural standards should not be deflected by debate about style. I acknowledge that style is important, but dressing a building in different stylistic devices, whether classical, gothic, high tech or of the modern movement, is essentially a subordinate activity. I attach great importance to the more fundamental architectural values of good proportion and scale, and skill in the use of space and light, which distinguish good buildings of any period.

I do not believe that these qualities can be achieved by regulation, control or Government edict. I cannot and would not want to try to impose my own views on design through individual planning appeals. So I must look to developers and designers to have greater regard for the impact of their buildings on the environment, now and in the future, and to aim always to achieve the highest possible standard.

County Structure Plan, Leicestershire

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the costs to local planning authorities in Leicestershire of advancing the present expiry date of the county structure plan of 1996: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* My Department has no information on costs relating specifically to the review of the Leicestershire structure plan. All such plans have to be reviewed well in advance of their end date if they are to continue to perform their planning function.

Planning Appeals (Staffordshire)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of planning appeals *(a)* upheld and *(b)* rejected by him in each year since 1980 in respect of planning refusals by (i) Lichfield district council, (ii) Cannock Chase district council and (iii) Stafford district council.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* This information is available only in respect of appeals decided since 1 April 1984 and is as follows.

Year	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
(i) Appeals allowed	12	15	10	14	13
Dismissed	16	26	23	28	32
(ii) Appeals allowed	7	7	4	6	4
Dismissed	8	7	6	10	4

Year	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
(iii) Appeals allowed	10	20	16	25	19
Dismissed	21	30	31	43	29

Litter

Mr. Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the definition of litter as adopted by his Department in regard to legislation covering waste and pollution.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 2 March 1990]*: We have not sought to define litter in the Environmental Protection Bill. Clause 71 of the Bill defines the offence of littering in terms of throwing down, dropping or otherwise depositing, and leaving

"any thing whatsoever in such circumstances as to cause, or contribute to, or tend to lead to, the defacement by litter of any place."

It is for the courts to decide, in all cases brought before them, whether the item complained of constitutes litter.

Commons

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce his legislative proposals in respect of the Common Land Forum's recommendation on commons.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 2 March 1990]*: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, on 12 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *64*.

Thatched Roofs

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue an urgent planning circular to planning authorities recommending that they relax planning requirements that storm damaged thatched roofs must be repaired or replaced with thatch, where shortage of available thatchers renders such a course impractable for the householders concerned.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 6 March 1990]*: In those cases where planning or other permissions are required, each proposal must be considered on its merits, having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. Wherever possible, local planning authorities should adopt a flexible approach, but they will need to take account of the long-term consequences for the special character of thatched buildings and their surroundings.

Lindane

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the container of lindane lost in the Channel in 1989 has been found.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The container was lost in an area of the Channel in which under a longstanding bilateral agreement the French authorities are responsible for co-ordinating counterpollution action. Despite an intensive and very comprehensive search mounted by the French Navy and continuing vigilance, it has not been found. My Department's marine pollution control unit maintains close contacts with the French authorities and is satisfied that every effort has been made to try and locate the missing container. Sampling and analysis of seawater and fish both in the area where the container was thought to be lost and in the English Channel as a whole has been undertaken by the French authorities and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) respectively. No increased levels of lindane have been detected. Further sampling and analysis will be undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food later this year.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Gallows (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the gallows kept at Wandsworth prison are next to be tested; and who will do this.

Mr. Mellor: The gallows will next be tested in June. This will be done by a member of the prison's works department.

Deportation Orders

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *371*, how many of the 31 Iranian citizens served with the notice of the intention to make deportation orders against them on the grounds that this would be conducive to the public good for reasons of national security were involved in full-time or part-time education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Fifteen.

Foreign Office Employees (Special Branch Detentions)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by name since 1979 the number of employees of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that have been detained by special branch officers; on what charge they were detained; and what was the result of their inquiries.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available.

Immigration (West Indies)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* Trinidad and Tobago, *(c)* Guyana, *(d)* Barbados and *(e)* St. Lucia have made applications for entry clearance certificates at the respective British High Commissions in the West Indies; how many such applications have been refused during the 12 months of 1989; and what are the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on entry clearance applications refused initially in 1987-88 was published on

5 April 1989, *Official Report*, columns *221-24*, in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). Information on applications in 1989 is given in the table. The other information requested is not available centrally.

Applications for entry clearance[1] to the United Kingdom in 1989
Number of persons

Country[2]	Applications: Newly received[3]	Applications: Granted[4,5]	Refused initially[5]
Jamaica	3,140	2,950	470
Trinidad and Tobago	1,920	1,780	240
Guyana	1,840	1,560	160
Barbados[6]	1,580	1,460	110

[1] Including applications for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Country in which the application was received, irrespective of the nationality of the applicant.
[3] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[4] Granted initially or on appeal.
[5] These applications may have been received in an earlier period.
[6] Including applications by persons in St. Lucia.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of *(a)* Trinidad and Tobago, *(b)* Guyana, *(c)* Barbados and *(d)* St. Lucia have (i) been admitted and (ii) been refused admittance and removed during the 12 months of 1989; and what are the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table. St. Lucia is not separately identified in the statistics of admissions and removals.

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Barbados admitted to, and refused leave to enter and removed from, the United Kingdom

Year/Month	Trinidad and Tobago: Total admitted	Trinidad and Tobago: Total refused leave to enter and removed	Guyana: Total admitted	Guyana: Total refused leave to enter and removed	Barbados: Total admitted	Barbados: Total refused leave to enter and removed
1979	18,000	20	7,600	26	8,900	9
1980	18,000	17	7,200	23	9,000	10
1981	17,000	17	6,700	10	8,800	7
1982	19,000	13	5,500	19	8,100	7
1983	20,000	10	5,750	17	8,120	5
1984	22,200	10	5,920	29	8,280	4
1985	24,600	6	6,490	16	9,230	2
1986	18,400	20	6,120	16	9,260	7
1987	18,500	31	5,680	27	9,100	9
1988	17,300	42	5,640	27	9,520	20
1989	17,500	76	6,230	44	9,510	31
January 1989	1,200	5	400	3	700	—
February 1989	900	7	300	1	300	2
March 1989	1,100	6	400	7	500	4
April 1989	1,300	5	500	4	500	3
May 1989	1,200	7	400	2	600	4
June 1989	1,700	4	600	3	1,200	—
July 1989	2,400	6	800	5	1,600	3
August 1989	2,100	9	800	3	1,400	5
September 1989	1,800	9	700	2	1,000	4
October 1989	1,600	6	600	5	700	3
November 1989	1,000	6	400	5	500	2
December 1989	1,100	6	400	4	500	1

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are being held in detention for immigration reasons; where they are being held; how many are asylum-seekers; and how many in the latter category are women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No central record is maintained of the number of people held in detention for immigration reasons. On 28 February there were 187 people detained solely under Immigration Act powers in the following establishments:

	Number
Harmondsworth detention centre	70
Queens Building, Heathrow	13
Gatwick Airport	6
Newhaven	11
HMP Haslar	87

It is estimated that some 30 people were detained at other prisons and in police cells in the south-east of England on the same day. There is no central record of how many of those detained had sought asylum.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women have been detained in Holloway for immigration reasons over the last 12 months; and how many of these are asylum-seekers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The most recent figures available are for the calendar year 1989. In this period, 16 women were detained in Holloway under the powers conferred by the Immigration Act 1971. There is no central record of how many of these had sought asylum.

Correspondence

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes dated 28 November (reference 27880/89).

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 28 February. I am sorry for the delay in his receiving a reply.

Tobacco Sales to Children

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to increase penalties for people who sell cigarettes to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Our proposals for strengthening the law to prevent illegal sales of tobacco to children will be put before Parliament when there is a suitable opportunity.

Police Shifts

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the use of the Ottawa system of police shift patterns.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are aware of the experiment that is being conducted with the Ottawa shift system but no representations have been made to my right hon. and learned Friend about it.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has conducted any studies in the last five years into alternative shift systems for the police service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such studies have been conducted by the Home Office. However, a report prepared by the Home Office police requirements support unit, which was sent to all chief officers of police in England and Wales on 30 January, collates all the research into shift patterns which has been done in forces during the past three years and proposes further research into alternative shift systems.

Police Rent Allowances

Mr Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the cost of implementing in full the agreement reached by the Police Negotiating Board; and what will be the cost resulting from his decision to set aside the agreement on rent allowances and related matters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has decided that serving officers who are receiving rent allowance on 31 March should receive no less after that date and that officers living in accommodation provided by the police authority on the same date should receive a transitional allowance of £300 a year for up to three years. These decisions mean that the level of expenditure on rent allowance is unlikely to be significantly reduced in the next financial year. There are too many hypothetical factors for a meaningful comparison to be made between this situation and what would have happened had my right hon. and learned Friend accepted the agreement of the Police Negotiating Board in full.

Asylum

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a decision has been reached regarding the request for asylum by the Chinese diplomat Ning Hong Shan.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. Ning Hong Shan was granted refugee status on 3 August 1989.

Civil Defence

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the outcome of the study into regional co-ordination of home defence planning undertaken in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have received a report on the study, and I have today placed in the Library a summary of its main findings. The study has identified a number of deficiencies in the co-ordination of home defence planning at regional level, and proposals are made for improvements. In the light of this study, and with the continuing support of other Departments, it has been decided that a small centrally led team should be established whose aim will be to improve co-ordination of planning in each region, drawing on and extending the work of the original study. Under these arrangements, responsibility for writing plans would remain with individual authorities, departments and public utilities at the local level, but the team will provide additional guidance, working through existing emergency planning fora.

I have asked officials to put the arrangements into effect as soon as possible and to consult interested parties at national and local level.

Cyclists (Convictions)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many pedal cyclists have been convicted in each of the last five years for offences involving *(a)* going through traffic lights, *(b)* riding on the pavement and *(c)* going the wrong way along a one-way street.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* Information available centrally cannot separately identify the number of pedal cyclists who commit offences of going through traffic lights and going the wrong way along a one-way street. Information on the number of pedal cyclists convicted of riding on the pavement for 1984 to 1988 is given in the table.

Pedal cyclists convicted o riding on a footpath[1]
England and Wales

Year	*Convictions*
1984	1,990
1985	1,198
1986	936
1987	502
1988	549

[1] Offence under Highway Act, 1835 (section 72), Metropolitan Police Act, 1839 (section 54(7)) and Byelaws.

Data for 1989 will not be available until autumn 1990.

PRIME MINISTER

Mortgage Interest Rates

Q30. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister how many letters she has received regarding the increases in mortgage interest rates.

The Prime Minister: I have received approximately 360 representations this year on the subject of interest rates.

North Downs

Q112. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the North Downs area of outstanding national beauty in mid-Kent.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Homelessness (London)

Q168. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received concerning homelessness in London.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations and reports on homelessness in London. I and my colleagues look at them very carefully in the light of the action we are taking as follow-up to our review of the homeless legislation.

South Africa

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the procedures operated by the Commission to ensure that EEC legislation is adhered to by member states, with particular reference to the South African sanctions measures; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Commission is in no doubt of our commitment to implementing Community legislation, nor about our concern that it should be adhered to similarly by other member states.

Young People (Inner Cities)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she has any proposals to introduce a consultation programme as part of the review into the effects of policies of a number of Government Departments towards young people who leave home and come to live in the inner cities;

(2) which Government Departments are involved in reviewing the effects of those Departments' policies towards young people who leave home and go and live in the inner cities; and which Department is taking the lead.

The Prime Minister: The main Departments involved in these discussions are the Department of the Environment, which has a co-ordinating role, the Department of Health, the Department of Employment, the Department of Social Security, the Home Office and the Department of Education and Science. When we have fully considered the issues, appropriate consultation arrangements will be made.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what arrangements she has made for the representation of Scotland in the review of the effects of a number of Departments' policies on young people who leave home and go to live in the inner cities;

(2) whether consideration of young people who leave home and live on the peripheral estates and in rural areas will be included in Departments' reviews of the effects of policies on young people who leave home and go and live in the inner cities.

The Prime Minister: Scottish Ministers are kept in touch with all discussions on this matter. The Scottish Development Department itself considers all situations which may contribute to homelessness.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to extend the poll tax to Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The local government arrangements in Northern Ireland are significantly different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom and we have no present plans to replace them.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

ENERGY

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the Government's plans to provide assurance in respect of the financial position of Nuclear Electric.

Mr. Wakeham: I have today laid before the House a minute informing the House of an assurance I propose to give to Nuclear Electric in respect of its financial position. Copies of the minute have been placed in the Library of the House.

WALES

Pre-school Playgroups

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to set up a fund from which money can be handed over to pre-school playgroups so that they can pay the proposed fees for inspection of playgroups alluded to in the new Children Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no plans to set up a fund from which the costs of registration and annual inspection of pre-school playgroups may be met.

We have received a number of representations on this issue. The Government do not propose to use the powers contained in the Children Act, to charge playgroups high registration or inspection fees. It is proposed that the charge will either be a nominal one or it may be possible for playgroups to be exempt from the fees regulations. This is to be considered in more detail during the process of consultation on new guidance and regulations which will lead to the introduction of the Act.

Water Pollution

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the health implications for people eating substantial amounts of fish from Lake Trawsfynydd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Annual assessments are made of the maximum dose of radioactivity received by people eating

fish from Lake Trawsfynydd. The latest information shows that only 7 per cent. of the internationally recommended dose limit of 1 milliSievert was received in 1988 by the most exposed groups.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of Legionnaire's disease have occurred in the Mid Glamorgan health district in the past two years.

Mr. Grist: As cases of Legionnaire's disease are not notifiable, the information is not available centrally.

Park and Ride

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of British Rail concerning park and ride facilities in south Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. This is a matter for British Rail in consultation with the local authorities.

Skomer, Dyfed

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decision regarding the designation of Skomer, Dyfed, as a marine nature reserve.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend expects to publish the requisite notice and draft order this month, with a statutory period of not less than 28 days within which representations on the draft order may be made. If at the end of that period there are no objections the order designating the area as a marine nature reserve may be made with or without modifications. If there are objections there is a statutory requirement either to hold a local inquiry or appoint a person to hear the objections before the order, with or without modifications, can be made.

Roads (Tolls)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the building of roads and the imposition of tolls by private companies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government wish to encourage greater private sector involvment in the provision of roads. The Green Paper "New Roads by New Means—Bringing in Private Finance" published in May 1989 set out our ideas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be publishing our response to the consultation shortly. Tolling is envisaged as the principal source of revenue for privately financed roads but in general road users will continue to have a choice between tolled privately financed roads and other roads. Where there is a monopoly, such as an estuarial crossing, the Goverment will impose some form of control on the level of the toll to be charged.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to detect cervical cancer at an early stage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: All district health authorities in Wales operate cervical screening services for women aged 20 to 64 based on computerised call and recall, which are designed to detect both pre-cancerous changes and the early stages of cervical cancer. Their efforts have been supported by a total of £1·3 million of recurring Welsh Office funds and, in addition, a further £390,000 has recently been allocated for the purchase of additional equipment. Welsh Office officials are continuing to work with health authority managers and clinicians to ensure maximum effectiveness of the programme.

Integrated Development Operation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement as to the allocation of funds originally intended for the integrated development operation for Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed.

Mr. Peter Walker: In 1988 the European Commission allocated £108 million of European regional development fund grant to Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys, and £30·5 million has already been committed to projects in the area. The Commission has not yet taken a decision on the allocation of additional funds from the European social and agricultural guidance funds which will convert the original programme into an integrated development operation.

Businesses

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many *(a)* small businesses, *(b)* medium-sized businesses and *(c)* large businesses are registered as employers in Wales;

(2) what is the definition in terms of members employed of *(a)* a small business, *(b)* a medium-sized business and *(c)* a large business registered in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is no single, accepted definition of small, medium or large businesses in terms of their employment. However, a breakdown of census of employment data units in Wales over a wide range of employment size bands is as follows:

Numbers of Census of Employment Data Units with employees in Wales: September 1987

Size of units (Number of employees)	*Number of units*[1] *(thousands)*
1 to 10	36·2
11 to 24	7·7
25 to 49	2·9
50 to 99	1·4
100 to 199	0·8
200 to 499	0·4
500 to 999	0·2
1,000 or more	0·1
All sizes	49·7

[1] The figures relate only to data units with employees. Sole proprietors and Her Majesty's Forces are excluded. Also excluded are agriculture and horticulture holdings. Some worksites may comprise several data units because of the way the information is collected eg because of different pay arrangements for weekly and monthly paid staff.

Source: 1987 Census of Employment.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many small businesses in Wales have taken advantage of the services offered by the business improvement scheme and the enterprise initiative with respect to preparations for the single market in 1992.

Mr. Peter Walker: A total of 2,362 Welsh companies have applied for assistance under the enterprise initiative

consultancy schemes, of which 2,208 have benefited from the initial business review. Since June 1989, the business review has automatically included specific questions and guidance on the implications of the single European market.

The enterprise initiative consultancy schemes are only one part of the Government's efforts to ensure that small businesses are aware of the importance of the single market. My Department's exports branch staff regularly raises such issues in its contacts with business while the single market unit provides guidance on all aspects of the single market. Since January 1989, the Welsh Office has provided speakers at seminars or conferences on 89 occasions, including a series of 14 Welsh Office seminars currently under way.

In total, some 3,425 grants, totalling £10 million, were offered under the business improvement services scheme, which operated from December 1984 to March 1989. It is not possible to provide information on how many of these were relevant to single market issues.

Eye Tests

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of eye tests carried out in Wales annually from 1985 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Grist: The number of eye tests carried out in Wales which were paid for by the family practitioner committees for each financial year were as follows:

	Number
1985-86	600,714
1986-87	626,644
1987-88	697,280
1988-89	733,469

Most of the sight tests since April 1989 will have been private transactions and statistical information on these is not available centrally. The Government have commissioned a survey of sight tests to cover the period from Christmas 1989 to 31 March 1990. The report on the survey results will be placed in the Library of the House of Commons, some time in early summer.

Dental Treatment

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total numbers of individual appointments kept at dentists' surgeries in the Principality annually from 1985 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available.

Colliery Waste

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take measures to bring together the relevant authorities to prepare for the immediate removal of the Albion colliery waste tip above the village of Cilfynydd in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Grist: The relevant authorities, the Mid Glamorgan county council, as owners of the land, and the Welsh Development Agency, which would provide funding, are already discussing the best course of action for dealing with the remains of the Albion tip.

Flooding

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take measures to bring together the relevant authorities in Mid Glamorgan to undertake the remedial work needed to ensure that there will be no repeat of the flooding suffered by householders and owners of commercial premises in Pontypridd and Telapod in 1990.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the relevant authorities to resolve, but I understand that they have met to discuss how a solution may be best achieved.

Water Pollution

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for *(a)* Langland bay and *(b)* Limeslade bay (i) the dates in 1989 when total coliforms and E. Coli samples were taken, (ii) the corresponding total coliforms and E. Coli results for each date and (iii) the EEC Bathing Waters Directive (76/160/EEC) conforming level for both total coliforms and E. Coli.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

	Langland Bay		*Limeslade Bay*	
Date of Sample 1989	*Total Coliforms per 100 ml*	*E. Coli per 100 ml*	*Total Coliforms per 100 ml*	*E. Coli per 100 ml*
3 May	1,300	760	2,400	1,000
9 May	2,800	640	2,500	2,000
16 May	1,100	400	700	200
22 May	1,800	540	2,300	800
31 May	7,200	2,200	15,000	2,000
5 June	200	110	2,100	200
13 June	840	190	800	500
20 June	5,000	470	6,000	3,000
27 June	300	100	100	100
4 July	1,400	580	2,900	2,000
10 July	200	100	10,000	6,000
18 July	700	680	1,600	300
25 July	100	100	700	300
31 July	600	100	500	100
8 August	100	100	400	400
14 August	600	50	500	400
22 August	400	100	1,400	900
31 August	4,000	280	200	100
5 September	110	70	7,000	540
11 September	800	340	3,200	450

Date of Sample 1989	Langland Bay		Limeslade Bay	
	Total Coliforms per 100 ml	E. Coli per 100 ml	Total Coliforms per 100 ml	E. Coli per 100 ml
19 September	13,000	10,000	2,200	2,000
26 September	2,000	100	3,000	650

A bathing water conforms with the bacteriological standards of the EC bathing water directive if 95 per cent. of samples taken do not exceed 10,000 total coliforms per 100 ml and 2,000 E.Coli per 100 ml.

Steel

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list with dates meetings at ministerial or senior official level between the Welsh Office and British Steel since privatisation;

(2) if he will list with dates the meetings he has had with the chairman of British Steel since privatisation;

(3) if he, any of his Ministers, or senior officials had discussions with British Steel about its current capital investment programme before that programme was finalised.

Mr. Peter Walker: There have been no formal discussions between myself, my ministerial colleagues or senior officials at the Welsh Office and the chairman or other senior officials of British Steel since privatisation, although public life in Wales provides frequent opportunities for informal meetings and discussions on a range of issues. British Steel's capital investment programme is a matter for the commercial judgment of the company.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Waste Disposal

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will examine the effectiveness of current legislation relating to dumping, tipping, and land infilling; and if he will consider bringing forward fresh proposals about (i) the unsightly desecration of the countryside, (ii) destruction of wildlife habitats and (iii) the problems of recycling.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The existing legislation in Northern Ireland on waste management is at present under review. I intend to consult district councils later this year with proposals for improved powers to control waste disposal.

The powers will include measures to minimise any detrimental effects of landfill on the amenity of the countryside and to ensure site restoration after disposal operations cease. Proposals will be put forward for more recycling of waste.

Fisheries Research

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish *(a)* the draught and tonnage of the fisheries research vessel Lough Foyle, *(b)* the type of fish covered by research carried out by the vessel since it came into the possession of the Northern Ireland authorities, *(c)* the number of full-time crew employed on the vessel, *(d)* the number of scientists employed on the vessel, *(e)* the number of other staff employed on the vessel, *(f)* the number of staff employed at the shore establishment and which directly support the vessel, *(g)* the port at which the vessel is based, *(h)* the sea area which is covered by research cruises on behalf of the Northern Ireland authorities, *(i)* the number of days spent at sea in each year since the vessel came into the possession of the Northern Ireland authorities and *(j)* the costs attributed to the vessel in each such year, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: The information is as follows:

(a) RV Lough Foyle:
—draught : 4·09 m
—gross tonnage : 547 tonnes

(b) Cod, whiting, herring, haddock, plaice, hake, scallops, nephrops.

(c) 13.

(d) None employed full-time on the vessel. Two permanent scientific staff and four permanent technical staff have taken part in research cruises. Additional scientific and technical staff are currently being recruited.

(e) Three administrative officers have participated in research vessel duties. Additional staff are currently being recruited.

(f) Staff at *(d)* and *(e)* above plus part of the time of management at the Fisheries Research Laboratory.

(g) Belfast.

(h) North coastal waters, the Irish sea and the Celtic sea.

(i) Since the maiden cruise of the RV Lough Foyle on 31 October 1988 until 23 February 1990 the vessel has spent 37 and 140 days at sea in 1988-89 and 1989-90 respectively.

(j) The operational costs of the vessel were £290,000 in 1988-89. The estimated cost in 1989-90 is £504,600.

Arts

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total expenditure by the Government on the arts in Northern Ireland; and in what specific areas the sums are expended.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: Total expenditure for the 1988-89 financial year was £4,660,310.

Within this total expenditure, the specific areas in which sums were expended are as follows:

1. *Arts Council Expenditure*

	£
Visual arts and film	342,798
Drama and dance	567,137
Grand Opera House	515,000
Music and opera	275,603
Ulster Orchestra	788,000
Literature	100,404
Traditional arts	58,428
Education	101,695
Community arts	129,709
Regional projects	70,878
Belfast Festival at Queen's	80,500

Further information is published in the Arts Council's 1989 annual report.

2. *Capital Programme for the Arts*
Under this programme the Department of Education paid the following grants:

	£
Down Arts Centre	236,865
Derry Civic Theatre	412
Coleraine, Flowerfield	18,129
Newry Arts Centre	560
Grand Opera House	117,918
Lyric Theatre	160,000
Arts Theatre	53,000
Old Museum Building	61,226
Crescent Arts Centre	50,000

3. *Business sponsorship incentive scheme for the Arts*
Under this scheme the Department of Education made the following awards:

	£
Bardic Theatre Group	7,834
Garvagh Historical Society	1,000
NI Association of Youth Clubs	3,000
Newtownabbey Drama Festival	5,000
Royal Ulster Academy	500
Orion String Quartet	500
Newry and Mourne Arts Centre	650
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum	8,334
Opera NI	9,334
Tinderbox	1,000
Broken Nails Production Co	2,500
Belfast Festival at Queen's	13,700
Riverside Theatre	500
Ulster Museum	11,386
ACNI Youth Drama Group	834
Ulster Orchestra Society Ltd	20,000
Orchard Gallery/Art Insight	2,817
St. George's Singers	500
QUB Choir and Orchestra	667

Portavogie Harbour

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why access to Portavogie harbour was blocked in the evenings of Friday 16 and Saturday 17 February; how many fishing boats had to anchor outside the harbour entrance and how many were within the harbour; whether Portavogie harbour was occupied to its full capacity that weekend; and how many fishing boats were damaged that weekend.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: One fishing vessel is known to have suffered damage during that weekend when she broke her moorings in the early hours of Monday morning. The mooring basins were occupied substantially in excess of their design capacity. Two vessels had to berth at the eastern breakwater in the outer harbour and approximately 80 vessels were berthed within the mooring basins or alongside the north pier. No fishing vessels had to anchor outside the harbour. During the evenings of Friday 16 and Saturday 17 February, the entrance to Portavogie harbour was not blocked although access to the mooring basins was not possible as the area was fully utilised.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many councillors there are in Northern Ireland; and how many of these are women.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: Of the 564 councillors currently in office, 64 are women. Two council seats are vacant.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Biological Warfare

128. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of biological warfare proliferation amongst developing countries.

129. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of biological warfare proliferation amongst developing countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are concerned about the possible development of biological weapons in several developing countries. We believe this is taking place, despite the 1972 biological weapons convention, which bans the production and possession of biological and toxin weapons, and to which over 100 states are party. It is not, however, our practice to comment on the detailed information available to the Government on such matters.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether talks have been instigated between Her Majesty's Government and the new Somali Government with a view to encouraging the conditions under which Britain might be able to restore aid to Somalia.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had a useful discussion with the new Somali Foreign Minister, Mr. Ahmed Jama Abdulle, on 23 February during which he encouraged the new Somali Government to persevere in pursuing the goals that they have set themselves of improved human rights observance, achievement of national reconciliation, liberalisation of the constitution, and economic reform.

Ethiopia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much famine relief has now been sent to Ethiopia by Her Majesty's Government; and what percentage has arrived in Ethiopia so far.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since mid-1989 we have made bilateral commitments via British NGOs of food aid totalling 44,250 tonnes, at a cost of some £10 million, together with other bilateral emergency aid commitments totalling £4 million. A total of 15,850 tonnes of food have already arrived, a further 14,700 tonnes are due for delivery before the end of April and the balance thereafter. Of non-food commitments our expectation was that about half would be delivered by the end of April but this is subject to the port of Massawa returning to normal functioning.

Arms Reduction

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to attend the next six-monthly meeting arranged by his

Department with non-governmental organisations to discuss arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs sees no reason to change the customary practice whereby these meetings are chaired by the responsible Minister of State.

Hungary

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his meeting with Hungarian Ministers in Budapest on 27 February to 1 March, he raised *(a)* the forthcoming nuclear non-proliferation treaty fourth review conference, *(b)* energy and environmental protection technological assistance for Hungary and *(c)* joint ventures between Hungary and the United Kingdom on the environmental clean-up in Hungary.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his visit to Spain on 26 February, he raised the matter of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with the Spanish Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent visit to the United Nations in New York, he raised the issue of the forthcoming fourth review conference of the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty with *(a)* the Secretary-General, *(b)* officials of the United Nations, *(c)* the United Kingdom permanent representative or *(d)* any of his counterparts.

Mr. Waldegrave: This issue was not raised during my right hon. Friend's visit.

United Nations Disarmament Handbook

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy in regard to the distribution in the United Kingdom and dependent territories of the United Nations annual disarmament handbook and periodical disarmament review.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no arrangements for public distribution of these publications.

Diplomats

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by year since 1979 the names of officials in his Department employed on diplomatic duties who have been *(a)* suspended from duty or *(b)* dismissed from the service; what offence they committed; and of those listed, if he will show in his answer, those who were fully reinstated to diplomatic duties.

Mr. Sainsbury: As a general principle, Government Departments do not disclose to third parties personal information relating to their employees, without the consent of the employee concerned.

Mr. Andrew Balfour

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 24 January, *Official Report*, column 686, if he is yet in a position to make a statement on Mr. Andrew Balfour's future in the diplomatic service.

Mr. Sainsbury: Mr. Balfour has been informed as recently as 23 February that his future is still under consideration and that we will be in touch with him shortly regarding the outcome.

Daphne Parish

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what negotiations his Department has had with the Iraqi authorities over the forthcoming trial of British citizen Daphne Parish charged with spying, and what assistance will be given by his Department for her defence.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made almost 50 representations to the Iraqi authorities on Mrs. Parish's behalf since the arrest last September, and have been in close contact with her family throughout.

In response the Iraqi authorities have assured us that Mrs. Parish's lawyer will be given proper access to her and her case file before the trial takes place, and that a representative from the embassy will be able to attend the trial. We look to the Iraqi Government to ensure that the trial is a fair one and that Mrs. Parish has the opportunity to present a full defence.

Czechoslovakia

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent visit to Czechoslovakia, the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), discussed verification of demilitarisation with the Czech authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: I did not.

Miss Toi Kwanran

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when the Bankok entry clearance officer's statement of refusal of entry concerning Miss Toi Kwanran, FCO Ref. GV100/6949 was forwarded *(a)* to his Department in London and *(b)* to the immigration appeals office;

(2) when the entry clearance officer's explanatory statement of refusal of entry was prepared in Bankok concerning Miss Toi Kwanran, who wishes to join her husband Mr. Neil Houghton of 32 Skelwith drive, Barrow.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members of 14 December 1988, I have referred the questions to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. My hon. Friend will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Angola

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the question of the withdrawal of Russian military advisers from Angola with Russian Government representatives in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have discussed the presence of the Soviet military advisers in Angola with the Soviet Government on a number of occasions, most recently on 13 February in Moscow. Withdrawal of the advisers would promote the cause of peace in Angola.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Deaf-blind Children

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional provision is being planned for the training of teachers of deaf-blind children.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The cost of training teachers of deaf-blind children is already provided for within the national priority areas within the LEA training grants scheme and consequently attracts financial support at the higher rate.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what consideration he has given to providing financial assistance to voluntary organisations to provide educational services, including pre-school services, for deaf-blind children;

(2) what financial support is being offered to local education authorities which wish to set up family centres as recommended in the policy statement, "Educational Provision for Deaf-Blind Children";

(3) what plans his Department has to offer financial support to local education authorities to enable them to carry out the recommendations made in the policy statement "Educational Provision for Deaf-Blind Children";

(4) what responses he has received from local education authorities to his Department's policy statement "Educational Provision for Deaf-Blind Children";

(5) what steps are being taken by his Department to follow up his Department's policy statement "Educational Provision for Deaf-Blind Children" published in March 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Responsibility for educational provision for deaf-blind children rests with local education authorities. The Department's policy statement on the educational needs of these children is intended to provide a framework within which local education authorities and bodies responsible for non-maintained schools will be able to plan services and provision for deaf-blind children. The Department will be following up this document later in the year, to see what progress has been made by authorities towards providing for the needs of deaf-blind children. It is for individual authorities, in the light of local circumstances, to decide upon the allocation of resources for the provision for deaf-blind children from the total funds available.

Manchester Local Education Authority

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet representatives of Manchester local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend recently visited Manchester LEA. I have myself agreed to meet a delegation from the authority.

National Curriculum

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements under the national curriculum.

Mr. MacGregor: The Secretary of State for Wales and I have today broadly endorsed the recommendations of the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) about arrangements for administering assessments in the core subjects of the national curriculum at key stage 1.

We have in particular accepted the council's advice that it should have responsibility for the national administration of the assessment arrangements; and that the local responsibility should rest generally with local education authorities (LEAs). We believe that this should apply to key stage 2 as well as key stage 1. We do not propose to prescribe in detail how the assessment arrangements should be implemented. In our view, effectiveness will best be secured by arrangements which, whilst conforming to the overall criteria of national policy, take account of LEAs' local circumstances and their existing patterns of organisation for monitoring and evaluating the performance of their schools.

LEAs and schools will need to make appropriate provision within the resources available to them for the establishment of these assessment arrangements as an integral part of the national curriculum. We have provided specific grant support to help redirect resources to these new priorities in 1990-91. We propose to extend this support in later years, and will be announcing details as soon as possible after Easter, following consultation with the local authorities. As a means of securing effective planning within the framework of national policy, we intend to make it a condition of grant that LEAs underpin their bids with coherent national curriculum assessment implementation plans.

A draft order under section 4(2)(c) of the Education Reform Act, setting out the proposed statutory requirements, will be published around Easter, and submitted to the House in final form by November 1990 in readiness for the first statutory assessments in summer 1991.

These arrangements are an important element in ensuring that the national curriculum does raise standards of teaching and learning in our schools.

I am arranging for copies of SEAC's advice and of my reply to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH

NHS Expenditure

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a breakdown of National Health Service spending per capita in relation to both capital and revenue spending by district health authorities.

Mr. Freeman: Tables showing district based figures of average total revenue and capital expenditure per head of resident population for 1988-89, the latest year available, have been placed in the Library.

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all appropriate cost headings taken into account by health authorities in determining the true cost of in-house laundering and dry-cleaning facilities.

Mr. Freeman: We expect health authorities to take account of all relevant expenditure in determining the cost of their in-house laundering and dry cleaning facilities.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what capital expenditure has been incurred by health authorities on the purchase of new laundering and dry-cleaning equipment over the past two years;

(2) what proportion of the capital expenditure incurred on the purchase of new laundry and dry-cleaning machinery and on the construction of new and renovation of existing laundry facilities over the last two years was for the creation of additional laundry capacity.

Mr. Freeman: Capital expenditure incurred by health authorities on the purchasing of laundry and dry cleaning equipment over the last two years is as follows:

	£
1987-88	2,350,000
1988-89	2,069,000

It is for health authorities to determine the laundry facilities required to meet their needs.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what capital expenditure has been incurred on the building of new National Health Service laundries and the renovation of existing laundry facilities over the last two years.

Mr. Freeman: No new National Health Service laundries have been built in the last two years. Renovation of existing laundries is a matter for local health authorities.

Business Rates

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount of uniform business rate to be paid for each district health authority and special health authority.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not held centrally about the contribution in lieu of the uniform business rate to be paid in respect of individual district health authorities. The estimated contributions for London postgraduate special health authorities to be paid in 1990-91 are as follows:

SHA	*1990-91 Contribution in lieu of the Uniform Business Rate*
	(£000s)
Hospital for Sick Children	588
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	283
Moorfields Eye Hospital	118
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley	267
National Heart and Chest	232
Royal Marsden	241
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	654
Eastman Dental	62

Nuclear Weapons Testing

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any communication over the past three months from his counterpart in the Soviet Union on the subject of the health effects of nuclear weapons testing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. In December last, I received a letter from Mr. E. Chazov, Minister of Public Health of the USSR, about nuclear weapons testing. I sent a reply on 19 January.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he requested that any official papers concerning public health effects of atmospheric atomic weapons tests be withheld from publication on 1 January under sections 3(4) and 5(1) of the Public Records Act 1958.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Ugilec

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to initiate a study of the potential adverse health effects on *(a)* the general public and *(b)* the production work force on the development of the chemical ugilec.

Mr. Freeman: The Commission of the European Communities has recently made a proposal to the Council of Ministers for a directive to prohibit the marketing and use of ugilec 141 and ugilec 121 in the Community. I understand that neither of these substances has been used to a significant extent in this country nor has either been manufactured here. However, the Government will be pressing for a full assessment, at the Community level, of the risks posed by these substances compared with the risks of PCBs which they are intended to replace.

GP Drug Budgets

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of cash limits on general practitioners' drug budgets that he plans to introduce in the next 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to introduce cash limits on GP drug budgets.

AIDS

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to change the current methods of funding AIDS education and research.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

NHS Reform

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that all working papers, implementation documents, consultative documents, departmental circulars and other publications in regard to the implementation of *(a)* the National Health Service aspects and *(b)* the care in the community aspects of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and the associated White Papers shall be numbered sequentially and shall be available in the Vote Office and the Library, together with a comprehensive list of all such publications which is brought up to date from time to time.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All relevant documents are already placed in the Vote Office or Library as appropriate.

Goodmayes Hospital, Essex

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions his Department has drawn from investigations into the causes of the recent outbreak of food poisoning at the Goodmayes hospital, Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Freeman: This is a matter for North East Thames regional health authority; in implementing its food hygiene policy, the region has taken note of the recommendations in the report into the outbreak of food poisoning at Goodmayes hospital.

Vasectomies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions his Department has drawn from the retrospective study into the possible connection between vasectomy operations and the development of testicular cancer, undertaken at Bangour central hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised that this study provides no conclusive evidence of a causal association between vasectomy and testicular cancer.

Condoms

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will introduce mandatory kite-marking of condoms on sale in Britain, to conform to the British Standard Institution's requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to make the new standard mandatory, although the matter is under review while an international standard is being considered.

The standard for condoms set by the British Standards Institute (BS 3704.1989) was issued on 30 March 1989. It has been approved under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 which makes it easier for action to be taken, for example, by trading standards officers, against suppliers of condoms which do not meet the standard.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he will define the necessary level of senior professional staff involvement in the management of the hospitals in assessing applications for National Health Service trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Each application will be judged on its own merits taking into account local circumstances.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the types of organisations he will expect regional health authorities to consult on National Health Service trust applications;

(2) what procedures regional health authorities will be required to follow in local consultations on National Health Service trust applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It will be for regional health authorities to determine locally the detailed arrangements to be made for consultation on NHS trust applications. We would, however, expect them to seek the views of district health authorities, the staff of the unit concerned, general practitioners, community health councils, and the local community.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he will be issuing on the format of National Health Service trust applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: An outline application document was circulated on 16 August 1989, under EL(89)(MB)148, and has been placed in the Library.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions have been performed by the procedure of killing the unborn baby by an injection of intra-cardiac potassium chloride administered through the wall of the womb.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* There were 15 abortions recorded in England and Wales during 1988 where an injection of intra-cardiac potassium chloride was administered through the wall of the womb.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pregnancy terminations were made after 24 weeks in the last year.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The latest complete year for which data are available is 1988. In that year, the number of terminations performed after 24 weeks gestation in England and Wales was 22. The provisional figure for the first nine months of 1989 is 17.

NHS Reform

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of any firms of outside consultants and the terms of their contracts employed by his Department in connection with the National Health Service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 27 February 1990, c. 127-28]:* I regret that the following details of consultants used for the launch of "Working for Patients" in 1989 were inadvertently omitted.

NML Presentations Limited—To assist with the launch of the White Paper.

NML Presentations Limited—To assist with the launch of the Self Governing Hospitals initiative.

Kingsley Lord—To assist with the development of an NHS Communications Programme.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving income support in the areas covered by the *(a)* Poplar, *(b)* Stepney and *(c)* Shoreditch Department of Social Security offices; and how many in Tower Hamlets as a whole.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table.

	Local office	Income support live load[1]
(a)	Poplar	13,680
(b)	Stepney	8,901
(c)	Shoreditch	9,917

Tower Hamlets is served by four social security offices—the three listed in the table and Hackney local office. The total income support live load[1] for these four offices is 47,870.

[1] *Source*: 100 per cent. of the cases in action on 30 November 1989. These figures include a number of cases where benefit has ceased but other action on the case is continuing.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 18 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *68*, he will list the six accountancy firms and provide details of the payments made to them during 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about the five accountancy firms employed by the Department is set out in the table. The firms have been employed on accountancy-orientated tasks which includes work on management information systems.

	1988-89 £	*1989-90 to date* £
Touche Ross	73,647	53,112
Price Waterhouse	380,000	236,000
BDO Binder Hamlyn		34,063
Peat Marwick McLintock		19,603
Ernst Young	25,404	85,863

I regret that the sixth firm referred to in the answer of 18 December at column *68* was a management consultancy firm included in error, which has not been employed on accountancy related work.

Pensioners

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to meet pensioners' representatives to discuss pensions, standing charges, concessionary fares and other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We regularly meet representatives from pensioners' organisations. Most recently my right hon. Friend the Minister of State accompanied the Prime Minister at a meeting with a delegation from the National Pensioners' Convention and discussed a range of issues of concern to them.

Local Offices

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, pursuant to his answer on 14 February, *Official Report*, column *298*, he will now provide the information on single payments and social fund expenditure by local offices in machine-readable form to the Library.

Mr. Scott: Information in the form requested is not currently available. However, we hope to make available details of social fund expenditure in a machine-readable form early in the new financial year.

Disability

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many deaf people are in receipt of *(a)* disability premium and *(b)* severe disability premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information requested is not available. However, in May 1988, the latest date for which information is available, 248,000 income support claimants were receiving the disability premium; and 35,000 the severe disability premium.

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry.

Taxable Incomes

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the total number of families with children whose taxable incomes are below the income tax thresholds; how many are in paid work; how many are receiving income support; and how many are receiving invalidity benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 17 January 1990]*: The number of families with children in 1987, the latest year for which information is available, whose taxable income was below the income tax threshold was about 1·5 million. Of these, 300,000 were in paid work, 100,000 received invalidity benefits and all but about 30,000 received supplementary benefit.

Notes:

1. Paid work is defined as where either the head or the spouse earns more than £4·00 per week.
2. Invalidity benefits included are:
   - Invalidity pension/allowance
   - Non-contributory Invalidity pension
   - Statutory sick pay
   - Sickness/industrial injuries benefit
3. *Source*: 1987 Family Expenditure Survey.

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what financial assistance he is providing to the British library *(a)* to help it relocate 300 staff from London to Yorkshire and *(b)* to purchase new buildings at Boston Spa.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: Relocation of staff from London to Yorkshire is part of the library's requirement for its future operations and is based on best value for money. The costs would normally be found from the library's grant-in-aid. Exceptionally, because the move will bring significant savings in long-term running costs, the Government are prepared in principle to allow the British library to retain up to half the receipts from the sale

of the building which it currently occupies at Store street in London as a contribution to the costs of constructing a new building at Boston Spa in Yorkshire and the relocation of staff.

This is subject to a satisfactory proposal for major expenditure commitments being presented by the board for my approval in the normal way.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what he estimates will be the costs of rehousing 300 British library staff from London to Boston Spa in *(a)* capital, for purchasing or existing buildings and *(b)* personnel costs in relocation allowances.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* Building costs at Boston Spa are estimated by the British library to be in the range of £2·5 million to £5 million. Final figures will depend on the construction strategy chosen by the library after further investigation. Personnel costs in relocation allowances are estimated to be £1 million.

Export of Goods

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter from Mr. Neil Chalmers, director of the natural history museum to him, dated 2 February, concerning the Export of Goods (Control Order) 1987.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* I have today laid in the Library of the House a copy of the letter of 2 February to me from Mr. Neil Chalmers, director of the natural history museum.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what action he will take to make it possible for "Lizzie", a 340 million-year-old fossil, to remain in Britain; and if he will urgently bring forward an amendment order to the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987 to bring natural objects such as fossils within its ambit.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* Statutory responsibility for export licensing rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Any amendment to Export of Goods (Control) Orders, the latest of which is SI 1989/2376, is therefore a matter for the Secretary of State. However, I have asked the reviewing committee on the export of works of art, which advises me on such matters, to submit recommendations about the export control of natural heritage items, so that I can advise my right hon. Friend on this matter.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Eqeal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, has encouraged the development of a range of high-quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* My Department has issued a policy statement about sexual harassment to its staff. The statement explains that all sexual harassment is unacceptable and outlines the complaints procedure. One complaint has been reported in the past five years. The individual initially received an oral warning. Her behaviour however continued, and following a written warning she resigned from the Civil Service as further disciplinary proceedings were instigated.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Money Management Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about the Money Management group of companies; their shareholders and directors and any current investigations being undertaken into their activities.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to those companies controlled by Mr. Adrian Ward. Information on Money Management Financial Services Ltd. and Money Management Associates Ltd. is on the companies public files at Companies House. The chief executive advises me that Mrs. Linzi Ward is shown as director of both companies. In each case, the two subscribers to the memoranda of association, Instant Companies Ltd. and Swift Incorporations Ltd., are shown as the only shareholders. I understand that Adrian Ward, trading under the name Money Management Financial Services, holds a licence issued by the Director General of Fair Trading under the Consumer Credit Act 1974. My Department does not hold records of other companies operated by Mr. Ward. MMFS had an interim authorisation which was withdrawn on 26 February. This is a matter for FIMBRA and the SIB.

As regards the question of investigations, my Department does not comment on the affairs of various companies.

Company Audits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend the Companies Act 1989 so as to require the supervisory bodies to ascertain whether or not an auditor has received more than 15 per cent. of his income from one client.

Mr. Redwood: No. Under the Act the Secretary of State may recognise a supervisory body only if, among other things, it appears to him that it has adequate arrangements and resources for the effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with its rules. Such arrangements

would need to cover any rules that required company auditors to observe the body's guidance on the proportion of income which they may receive from any one client.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward legislation to prevent individuals criticised by his Department's inspectors from acting as auditors for companies.

Mr. Redwood: No, but under part II of the Companies Act 1989, the Secretary of State may not recognise a supervisory body unless it appears to him that it has adequate rules and practices designed to ensure that company auditors are fit and proper persons for appointment.

EC Structural Funds

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of "The Structural Funds of the European Communities", compiled by Graeme de la Mer for the London chamber of commerce.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The publication in question is available for companies to inspect in the world aid section of my Department. The world aid section is a central source of information on commercial opportunities arising from projects financed by the European structural funds in the other member states of the Community.

Funerals

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the 1989 Office of Fair Trading report entitled "Funerals", and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A number of right hon. and hon. Members have written to the Secretary of State and me recently about the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) 1989 report on funerals. Most of them had seen a report prepared by the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) detailing its criticisms of the OFT report.

The OFT report was the result of a monitoring survey of the effectiveness of the NAFD's code of practice. The Director General of Fair Trading has a duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to encourage industry associations to adopt codes of practice which promote and safeguard the interests of consumers. In carrying out this duty he acts independently and the report on funerals is therefore a matter for him. I know that he is concerned about the comments made in the NAFD report and he has prepared a comprehensive response. I shall ask him to write to the right hon. Member.

Electronics

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had from the electronics industry on the subject of skills shortages.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been no direct representations from the electronics industry on skills shortages during the past two months, but there have, in the past, been approaches with regard to IT skills shortages. In recognising this my Department announced support of up to £440,000 over three years for the recently launched Women into Information Technology (WIT) campaign, where this support is appropriately matched by industry. My Department supports a programme aimed at stimulating the production of distance learning video courses on subjects directly relating to skills in microelectronics, information technology, and their applications. Support is also being given to an industry-further education collaborative programme aimed at producing interactive video courses relating, in the main, to IT skills.

My Department also has an information technology advisory board (ITAB) with representatives from industry, commerce and academia. One of ITAB's support committees advises specifically on education and training and comments on IT skills issues.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the European Community's plans in respect of animal testing for cosmetics.

Mr. Forth: The proposed amendments to the cosmetics directive are designed to improve the level of public safety. The United Kingdom has succeeded in limiting the animal testing required to the essential minimum.

European Commission

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met his counterparts in the European Commission; and what topics were discussed.

Mr. Redwood: I meet European Community Ministers and Commissioners on a regular basis to discuss a range of issues.

Manufacturing Productivity

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has carried out any studies into the effects of Government regulations on productivity improvements in manufacturing industry and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department co-ordinates the Government's deregulation initiative, under which individual Departments review existing regulatory requirements and scrutinise new proposals in order to minimise any unnecessary constraints these may impose on business performance. In assessing the costs to business of complying with new regulations, Departments have particular regard to the impact on the management resources of small firms.

Japanese Companies

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of Britain's manufactured exports are made by Japanese-owned companies.

Mr. Redwood: I regret that the information is not available.

Steel

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many meetings since privatisation there have been between *(a)* Ministers, and *(b)* senior officials, and the chief executive or other board members of British Steel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the flotation of British Steel my noble Friend the Minister for Trade has met a member of the company's board in connection with an overseas trade mission.

There have been meetings between officials in various parts of the Department and members of the British Steel board since the flotation on a variety of subjects, but the precise number could be established only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list with dates meetings between himself and the chairman of British Steel since privatisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Neither I nor my predecessor has formally met the chairman of British Steel since the flotation of the company.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has formulated a policy view about a single plate mill strategy in the steel industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Internal Market Council held on 22 February.

Mr. Redwood: The Council reached a satisfactory agreement on the main agenda item: a directive on public procurement in the water, transport, telecommunications and energy sectors. This represents an important step towards the liberalisation of public procurement in the Community. The Council also received a progress report from the Commission on further work in this area.

The Council also agreed a timetable for future work towards liberalisation of the insurance market in the Community, and discussed amendments to the fourth and seventh company law directives.

This was a satisfactory first Council under the Irish Presidency, which maintains the momentum on the single market built up during the French Presidency.

EC-USSR Trade Agreement

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the EC-USSR trade and economic co-operation agreement.

Mr. Ridley: Following discussions in the Community, this agreement was signed after the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 December. While welcoming the conclusion of this significant agreement the Government very much regret that they had not allowed enough time for the parliamentary scrutiny process to be completed before they felt bound to give their consent to the signature of this agreement. Unfortunately, since both the Soviets and our EC partners attached so much importance to the early signature of this agreement any attempt to delay it would not have been understood and could have put at risk any commercial benefit that the United Kingdom may stand to gain from the momentum and climate of good will which the agreement has generated.

I hope that the House will understand, therefore, why the Government agreed, exceptionally, to the signature of the agreement before the scrutiny process had been completed.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in support of the proposal by the Anglo-Greek Consortium to acquire the NESL Southwick shipyard for the purpose of vessel construction after 9 December 1993.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* I have received representations of support for this proposal from the hon. Member, British Shipbuilders, Sunderland metropolitan borough council and A and P Appledore International Limited. The Tyne and Wear development corporation expressed a preference for the use of Southwick rather than North Sands if the Anglo-Greek consortium's proposal were to go ahead.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* All my Department's management training courses, including those courses specific to women, deal with equal opportunities issues.

Staff are also able to attend a separate training course on equal opportunities, and are guided by my Department's policy statement and programme of action on equality of opportunity for women.

We do not have the figures available on the proportion of managers at grade six level and above who have received formal training on equal opportunities issues, but all have received guidance.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years or over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The DTI is considering arrangements for workplace child care for pre-school age children. We are, for example, giving strong financial support to an OMCS-led child care study considering the feasibility of interdepartmental nurseries in both central and outer London.

In conjunction with other Government Departments we organise holiday play schemes for five to 12-year-old children in London and Cardiff. Future provision will depend on the outcome of the OMCS-led study, and on other discussions.

Child care schemes are funded by the users. However, my Department expects to contribute to the start-up costs, and to provide ongoing financial support to running costs where this offers value for money and can be contained within departmental running costs.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grade is his Department's equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* My Department's equal opportunities officer is a grade seven.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* Our recruitment and promotion policy and procedures are monitored regularly to ensure that they operate equitably for all groups of staff. My Department's equal opportunities officer is involved in that monitoring.

With women returners in mind, my Department is about to embark on a trial recruitment exercise for clerical staff in the Westminster area. Women will also benefit from a career break scheme including a definite right of return which my Department will be introducing shortly.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of civil servants in his Department are women at each of the grades *(a)* seven, *(b)* six, *(c)* five, *(d)* four, *(e)* three, *(f)* two and *(g)* one.

Mr. Forth: *[holding answer 5 March 1990]* The proportions as at 26 February 1990 were:

	Per cent
G1	0
G2	11
G3	4
G4	11
G5	12
G6	8
G7	12

Sexual Harassment

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff; how many complaints have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The policy of my Department is to regard any form of sexual harassment as totally unacceptable. Guidance on reporting complaints has been issued to all staff. Five complaints have been reported in the past five years. Of these, one was withdrawn by the complainant before it was investigated, and two were found to have insufficient evidence to support further action. In the other two disciplinary charges were brought and penalties imposed.

Pin-ups

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The Department's existing guidance to staff on sexual harassment requires managers to take action where posters or photographs are displayed which seem likely to give offence.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average percentage of pay in profit-related pay schemes in each year; and what is their distribution.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information on actual payments of profit-related pay is not yet available.

Employer Stock Ownership

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the distribution by *(a)* size and *(b)* sector of firms with employer stock ownership plans;

(2) what is the number of employer stock ownership plans and employee share ownership trusts that have been set up in each of the last five years; how many employees are involved; and how much less corporation tax has been paid as a result.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue will not learn of the establishment of employee share ownership trusts of the kind defined in the Finance Act 1989 until claims for the tax relief provided by that legislation are received. Such claims may be made up to two years after the end of the period of account in which the relevant company contributions are made. None has yet been cleared.

I regret that information is not available on the extent and character of other arrangements which are also commonly, though imprecisely, known as employee share ownership plans.

As regards the operation of the 1,603 all-employee share schemes approved by the Inland Revenue up to 5 April 1989, however, some 2 million employees had been given shares or options over shares with an initial market value of some £5 billion by that date. Other information on these schemes is published in "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989".

European Investment Bank

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution the European Investment Bank made to underwriting the Channel tunnel project.

Mr. Ryder: The European Investment Bank approved a loan of £1 billion to the Channel tunnel project in 1987. The European Investment Bank has made no contribution to underwriting the loan. Security for the loan will be provided by the syndicate of banks co-ordinating the financing of Eurotunnel in the form of:

(a) Letters of credit from up to 20 first class commercial banks;

(b) A pro-rata share with the syndicate banks in the charges on the project revenues and assets.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are taken to prevent the misappropriation of the premium bond prize winners fund.

Mr. Ryder: There is no scope for misappropriating money from the premium bond prize fund. Prize draws are carried out under the strictest security and are subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office and the Department for National Savings' own internal auditors. Winning numbers are selected wholly at random by ERNIE and this machine has been so designed that it cannot be programmed to generate any particular number. Tests to verify the randomness of the numbers selected are conducted by the Government Actuary after every prize draw. Prize draws and the verification of prizes against valid bonds are subject to strict testing, checking and security procedures. The bonds and stock office carries out checks to ensure that prizes are paid out only to the registered holders of winning bonds. Prizes are paid from the National Loans Fund, for which audited accounts are presented annually to Parliament. Numbers of all winning prizes are published in a monthly supplement to the *London Gazette* and copies are available for inspection at main post offices.

Taxation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) of 20 February, *Official Report*, columns *681-82*, on investment income and earned income, if he will give the average sum per taxpayer reflected in the aggregate amounts for each taxpayer group.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates are given in the table. They are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. All estimates are subject to a large degree of uncertainty since some investment income on which tax is deducted at source is not reflected in the survey.

Average amounts of investment income and earned income

(£ per annum)

Group of income tax payers	*1988-89*		*1989-90*	
	Investment income	*Earned income*	*Investment income*	*Earned income*
Top 1 per cent.	21,230	69,340	27,100	75,700
Top 5 per cent.	8,570	40,680	10,830	44,540
Top 10 per cent.	5,600	32,300	7,280	35,250
Top 20 per cent.	3,720	25,330	4,860	27,660
Top 25 per cent.	3,240	23,390	4,240	25,540
Bottom 70 per cent.	660	8,030	840	8,800
Bottom 50 per cent.	580	6,580	740	7,200
All taxpayers	1,320	12,190	1,720	13,310

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further plans he has for abolishing discriminatory provisions for purposes of taxation.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product total taxation was in June 1979 and today.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not available on a monthly basis. Information for the years 1979 and 1988 (the latest available) was given in the reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 8 January 1990, *Official Report*, column *558*.

Gross National Product

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the gross national product per head of population in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not available. There are no estimates of gross national product which by definition includes income from assets held abroad. There are, however, estimates of gross domestic product which exclude such income. They are produced annually by the Central Statistical Office and the latest figures for these countries were published in *Economic Trends* of November 1989.

Income Tax (Wales)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of income tax collected in Wales in each of the five years up to 1988-89.

Mr. Lilley: Information for the period requested is available from 1984-85 to 1987-88 and covers residents of Wales. The estimates are in terms of liabilities rather than tax collected and are shown in the table.

Year	*£ billion*
1984-85	1·38
1985-86	1·39
1986-87	1·49
1987-88	1·51

VAT (Wales)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of value added tax collected in Wales in each of the five years up to 1988-89.

Mr. Ryder: Information on value added tax paid by businesses registered in Wales could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It would not reflect tax collected by businesses in Wales registered elsewhere in the United Kingdom and would include tax accounted for by businesses registered in Wales which carried on business elsewhere.

Mortgages

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *12*, what was the average increase in repayments per week on the average mortgage in each region between 1 June 1988 and today.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows.

Region	*Average new mortgage*[1]	*Weekly payment*[2]		*Increase*
		9·8 per cent. interest rate	*14·5 per cent. interest rate*	
	£	*£*	*£*	*£*
Northern	28,400	40·14	59·39	19·25
Yorks and Humberside	29,600	41·84	61·90	20·06
East Midlands	34,700	51·26	75·85	24·59
East Anglia	44,600	69·92	103·45	33·53
Greater London	60,900	100·64	148·90	48·26
South East	53,200	86·13	127·43	41·30
South West	43,700	68·22	100·94	32·72
West Midlands	33,800	49·56	73·34	23·78
North West	31,300	44·85	66·36	21·51
Wales	30,200	42·78	63·30	20·52
Scotland	26,500	37·46	55·42	17·96
Northern Ireland	24,200	34·21	50·61	16·40
United Kingdom	38,300	58·05	85·89	27·84

[1] Third quarter 1989.
[2] Assuming endowment mortgage.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make provision for writing down against tax liabilities the increase in mortgage debts of individuals where incurred because of the rise in interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot comment on tax matters in advance of my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of local expenditure is raised *(a)* locally and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to table 21.4.13 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1021).

Japanese Banks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Japanese banks have been granted a licence by the Bank of England to open a branch in London; and what reciprocal facilities have been granted to United Kingdom banks.

Mr. Ryder: The following Japanese banks have been authorised by the Bank of England to open branches in the United Kingdom:

Bank of Tokyo Ltd
Bank of Yokohama Ltd
Chuo Trust and Banking Company Ltd
Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank Ltd
Daiwa Bank Ltd

Fuji Bank Ltd
Hokkaido Takushoku Bank Ltd
Industrial Bank of Japan Ltd
Kyowa Bank Ltd
Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan Ltd
Mitsubishi Bank Ltd
Mitsubishi Trust and Banking Corporation
Mitsui Bank Ltd
Mitsui Trust and Banking Company Ltd
Nippon Credet Bank Ltd
Saitama Bank Ltd
Sanwa Bank Ltd
Sumitomo Bank Ltd
Sumitomo Trust and Banking Company Ltd
Taiyo Kobe Bank Ltd
Tokai Bank Ltd
Toyo Trust and Banking Company Ltd
Yasuda Trust and Banking Company Ltd

In addition the Bank of England has authorised United Kingdom incorporated subsidiaries of a further eight Japanese banks.

Five United Kingdom banks have branches in Japan. The Government are not aware of any United Kingdom bank currently seeking authorisation for banking activities in Japan.

Civil Service (Working Patterns)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many reports have been produced since July 1987 on the possibility of changing working patterns in the Civil Service.

Mr. Ryder: A report on the potential for developing more flexible working patterns in the Civil Service was produced by the Cabinet Office in September 1987. A copy was placed in the House of Commons Library at the time.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the status of the working patterns reports of September 1987; if he will list the recommendations of that report that were accepted by the Government; and if he will provide a progress report on their implementation.

Mr. Ryder: The report on working patterns was an internal research report which looked at the potential for developing more flexible working patterns in the Civil Service. It was not prescriptive. Departments have been encouraged to make use of the ideas and suggestions contained in the report, where these will help to meet the needs of the work and their staff more efficiently and effectively. A number are now taking forward initiatives in these areas.

National Loans Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which bodies have borrowed from the National Loans Fund over the last year.

Mr. Lilley: In the year to February 1990, the National Loans Fund has made most advances to the Public Works Loan Board. Loans have also been made to the following bodies:

New Town Development Corporations
Housing Corporations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Regional Water Authorities (pre-privatisation)
British Rail
Civil Aviation Authority
Crown Suppliers
Her Majesty's Stationery Office
Land Authority for Wales
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board
Royal Mint
Scottish Development Agency
South of Scotland Electricity Board
Welsh Development Agency

Hotels and Guest Houses (Valuation)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he is giving to allowing valuation officers to assess hoteliers and guest house owners on supported profit figures.

Mr. Lilley: Valuation officers are required to determine the rateable value of hotels and guest houses having regard to the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. An estimate has to be made of the rent at which the property might reasonably be expected to be let from year to year, and profitability is one aspect that can be taken into account in appropriate cases.

Household Incomes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average household gross income in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland in 1989-90.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average household net income in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates for 1989-90 are not yet available.

Banking Services

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish the Government's response to the Jack committee report on banking services, law and practice.

Mr. Ryder: It was announced last week that a committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Sir George Blunden to oversee the preparation of a code of banking practice by the British Bankers Association (BBA), the Building Societies Association (BSA), and the Association for Payment Clearing Services (APACS). This was the central recommendation of the review committee's report. I warmly welcome this initiative by the banks and building societies and am particularly pleased by their confirmation that the consumer interests will be fully consulted. The Government's response to the remainder of the recommendations in the review committee's report will be published shortly.

National Insurance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing information available to him on the national insurance contributions or equivalents paid by people in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* Italy, *(c)* France, *(d)* the United States of America, *(e)* Holland and *(f)* the United Kingdom, together with the income bands where appropriate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Details concerning national insurance contributions or their equivalents for member states of the European Community are contained in the Department of Social Security's publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in

the European Communities," the 1989 issue of which is available in the Library. For the USA the 1990 contribution rate for employers is 7·65 per cent. each and the rate for the self-employed is 15·3 per cent. The maximum annual contribution for both employers and employees is $3,924.45 for 1990. For the self-employed it is $7,848·90.

SCOTLAND

Council House Sales

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sales of council houses in Scotland by quarter up to and including the last quarter of 1989 since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information on sales to sitting tenants of public sector agencies in Scotland for the periods requested, other than 4th quarter 1989 for which figures are not yet available, is set out in the following table:

Sales of dwellings to sitting tenants of public authorities Scotland, January 1985 to September 1989

Period	*Local authority*	*New towns*	*Scottish homes*[1]
1985			
1st quarter	3,260	397	697
2nd quarter	2,785	385	398
3rd quarter	2,497	346	673
4th quarter	2,425	379	695
1986			
1st quarter	2,764	271	455
2nd quarter	2,090	263	478
3rd quarter	2,402	467	444
4th quarter	3,050	614	696
1987			
1st quarter	3,411	375	325
2nd quarter	2,421	563	600
3rd quarter	3,476	506	803
4th quarter	4,505	697	1,287
1988			
1st quarter	6,367	485	1,050
2nd quarter	4,305	524	1,300
3rd quarter	4,958	680	1,508
4th quarter	6,998	883	2,597
1989			
1st quarter	9,046	456	1,765
2nd quarter	6,389	1,210	476
3rd quarter	5,717	1,375	2,068

[1] Scottish Special Housing Association prior to 2nd quarter 1989.

Leukaemia

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish the figures for the number of recorded cases of *(a)* leukaemia and *(b)* non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in Dunoon and the surrounding area for each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The registered number of cases in the postcode area (which includes Dunoon for the period from 1968 to 1987 (latest available year) are as follows:

Year	*Leukaemia*	*Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma*
1968	3	1
1969	1	0
1970	0	3
1971	0	3
1972	3	2
1973	0	3
1974	0	3
1975	1	2
1976	3	1
1977	3	0
1978	1	1
1979	0	1
1980	2	3
1981	1	1
1982	2	3
1983	1	1
1984	0	4
1985	2	1
1986	0	1
1987	1	3

Training Schemes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of grant given towards the employment training scheme to each Scottish district council in 1988-89, 1989-90 and the projected figures for 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: In employment training a basic training grant at a rate of £18 per trainee week is paid to organisations which have a contract as a training manager for employment training. In addition supplementary grants are payable to training managers to cover additional costs associated with the provision of project or higher cost training and are related to individual needs. The amounts paid to individual training managers either as basic training grants or supplementary grants depend on the number of trainees they can attract and the needs of the individual trainees. Fifteen district councils:

Angus
Argyll and Bute
Caithness
Clydesdale
Cumnock and Doon Valley
Dunfermline
East Kilbride
Hamilton
Kirkcaldy
Lochabar
Midlothian
Moray
North East Fife
Ross and Cromarty
Wigtown

are at present training managers, but it is not possible to estimate the amount of grant payments to each of these for the years in question.

Radon Gas

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the causes of high radon gas levels in Kincardine and Deeside district; if he will identify the areas particularly affected; and if he will summarise the assistance and advice available to householders.

Mr. Rifkind: Studies by the National Radiological Protection Board have indicated that the accumulation of

higher than normal concentrations of radon in buildings is influenced by the uranium content and permeability of the underlying rocks and soils, and also by some characteristics of the buildings. Some of these factors combine in the Dee valley to cause higher levels of this naturally occurring gas in a small percentage of houses: such levels have been discovered in the areas of Aboyne, Ballater, Banchory, Braemar and Torphins.

The Scottish Office has arranged for the National Radiological Protection Board to provide information and a free radon measurement to any concerned householder in the Kincardine and Deeside district. In addition, grants continue to be available, through the present improvement grants system, for any remedial action which may be necessary.

Steel

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates when, with steel as the principal topic, he has met delegations from steelworkers and other organisations in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: During the last six months, my right hon. and learned Friend met a delegation of Ravenscraig shop stewards on 30 November 1989, a delegation of Scottish Labour Members of Parliament on 7 December 1989, and representatives of Strathclyde regional council and the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 8 January 1990.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list with dates the meetings he has had, or any of his Ministers or senior officials have had, with the chief executive or other board members of British Steel since privatisation.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1988. He met the chairman again, with his chief executive, on 26 October 1989.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he, any of his Ministers, or senior officials had discussions with British Steel about its current capital investment programme before that programme was finalised.

Mr. Lang: The capital investment programme of British Steel is a matter for the company.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department has formulated an official policy on the issue of a single plate mill strategy in the steel industry.

Mr. Lang: The issue of a single plate mill strategy is a matter for British Steel. My right hon. and learned Friend has made clear his view that the company should give full and careful consideration to the case for investment in Scotland.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 272, whether on 26 October 1989, or in the continuing contacts mentioned by him in *Official Report*, column 271, he raised with the chairman of British Steel its investment programme and future intentions towards Ravenscraig;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 271, whether in his discussions with the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1989 he raised the future of Dalziel works;

(3) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 271, whether on 26 October 1989 the chairman of British Steel informed him that a plate mill was stored at Lackenby;

(4) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 271, whether on 26 October 1989 he discussed with British Steel's chairman the issue of a single plate mill strategy;

(5) where his meeting was held with the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1989; and how long the meeting lasted.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend's meeting with the chairman of British Steel was held in his office in Whitehall; it lasted about an hour. The detailed matters discussed are commercially confidential.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 271, whether the continuing contact with British Steel since last October has been at ministerial or official level.

Mr. Lang: Both:

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 271, what specific issues his Department has raised with British Steel in its continuing contact with that organisation.

Mr. Lang: The detailed matters raised by my right hon. and learned Friend's Department with British Steel are commercially confidential.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what correspondence he has received from British Steel since his meeting with the chairman of British Steel on 26 October.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received two letters from the chairman of British Steel, the contents of which are commercially confidential.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received information from British Steel about *(a)* its intention to impose a production pause on Ravenscraig over the Christmas and new year holiday period, and *(b)* the latest production pause to be imposed on Ravenscraig.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend's officials received information from British Steel on 22 November 1989 about the first production pause and on 20 February 1990 about the latest production pause.

Pensioners

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many single pensioners are now eligible for payment of the poll tax who had *(a)* no liability for rates in 1987-88, *(b)* no liability for rates in 1988-89 and *(c)* liability for 20 per cent. rates in 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 22 February 1990]*: Information on the number of single pensioners in

Scotland who are now liable for the community charge but who had no liability for rates in 1987-88 or 1988-89 is not available. This is because a number of pensioners had no liability to pay domestic rates, not as a result of the housing benefit they received, but, for example, because they lived in another person's house and made no payment towards the rates of that property. These pensioners were not entitled to housing benefit and therefore they would not have been identified by the housing benefit management information system. Our latest estimate for 1989-90 is that about 150,000 single pensioners in Scotland are receiving the maximum community charge rebate of 80 per cent.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate *(a)* the number of bed and breakfast establishments in Scotland, *(b)* the number which operate commercially for less than 100 nights per annum, *(c)* the number which have six or fewer beds for commercial let and *(d)* the number which meet both the criteria set out in categories *(b)* and *(c)* above.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: In order to be eligible for the rating exemption announced by my right hon. and learned Friend last week, bed and breakfast establishments must operate for fewer than 100 nights per annum or have six or fewer beds for commercial let.

The information requested is as follows and is taken from the register of the Scottish Tourist Board compiled for the purposes of taking an entry in the board's "Where to Stay" guides:

	Number
(a) Number of establishments	3,846
(b) Number which operate commercially for less than three months[1] per year	68
(c) Number which have six or fewer beds	2,943
(d) Number which meet criteria at both *(b)* and *(c)*	45

[1] For the purposes of the board guides, establishments are described as open for a given number of months in the year. No information is available on the number of days of opening.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of preparing the answer of 27 February to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), *Official Report*, columns *117-19*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: About £110.

Police Accommodation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he is making to the Scottish Police Federation following representations made to him concerning *(a)* the position of officers in provided accommodation and the introduction of a provided accommodation allowance and *(b)* updating of the force rent allowance; and when he expects to lay regulations governing the level of allowances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the chairman and general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation on 8 February to hear their representations about the proposed arrangements to replace rent allowance with a new housing allowance.

In response to the representations of the Scottish Police Federation my right hon. and learned Friend has decided to make provision in the forthcoming regulations for an allowance of £300 a year to officers who were living on 31 March 1989 in accommodation provided by the police authority; this allowance will continue for three years or until the officer leaves provided accommodation, whichever is sooner.

The regulations will have the effect of permitting rent allowance reviews due in 1989 to proceed, but my right hon. and learned Friend is not persuaded that rent allowances should be updated in forces not due reviews in 1989.

The regulations are expected to be laid this week.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has submitted to the European Community Commission any detailed proposals for allocating an additional 1 per cent. of milk quota in 1990.

Mr. Gummer: My proposals were that quota should be allocated to producers who received awards from the Dairy Produce Quotas Tribunal which were scaled back and have not yet been fully implemented; to smaller producers; to producers in remote areas, principally the islands of Scotland and the Scilly Isles; and to new entrants. The Commission raised a number of points in connection with these proposals. With one exception, which concerns my proposal to lend quota to new entrants rather than grant it outright, all points of difficulty have now been satisfactorily resolved and I am awaiting formal Commission agreement. Regulations will then be laid before Parliament and the majority of the quota issued before the end of the current quota year.

Fishing Boat Grants

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he received the applications for fishing boats grants Nos. (1) UK/0/114/89, (2) UK/0/122/89, (3) UK/0/117/89 and (4) UK/0/113/89; when he expects to submit them to the European Commission; and if he will make a statement about the delay in release of these grant payments.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

Project number	*Date application received*	*Date of Commission announcement of successful grant awards*	*Date claim received*
UK/0/114/89	5 July 1988	31 March 1989	26 June 1989
UK/0/122/89	5 July 1988	31 March 1989	26 June 1989
UK/0/117/89	31 August 1988	31 March 1989	26 June 1989
UK/0/113/89	30 September 1988	31 March 1989	6 June 1989

The submission of individual claims for payment of grants is not permitted by the European Commission. The member state must be in receipt of a certain number of

claims (usually 20 per cent. of the aid awarded in any one round) before they can be submitted to the Commission. We are now satisfied that an appropriate number of claims has been received to meet the Commission's requirements and payment can be expected shortly.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will initiate a programme of active surveillance of Britain's cattle stock involving veterinary surgeons making visits to farms, markets and slaughterhouses to identify cattle suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy or the early symptoms of the disease.

Mr. Maclean: There is already a programme of active surveillance carried out by veterinarians in the Ministry's state veterinary service, official veterinarians employed by local authorities and those in private practice.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has as to the transmissibility of *(a)* bovine spongiform encephalopathy and *(b)* scrapie through the consumption of bone or bone meal from affected animals.

Mr. Maclean: Epidemiological evidence shows that the most likely cause of BSE was the feeding to cattle of compound rations containing meat and bone meal which included material derived from sheep infected with scrapie.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of incidents where bulls at artificial insemination centres have been found to have contracted bovine spongiform encephalopathy, including the age of the bull, the breed and the artificial insemination centre.

Mr. Maclean: BSE has been confirmed in five Friesian bulls at AI centres. Their ages in months were 48, 55, 64, 67 and 71. It is not the practice to identify the premises where cases occur.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many progeny per year are normally expected from bulls at artificial insemination centres.

Mr. Maclean: A bull approved for use in artificial insemination might be expected to sire an average of 200 progeny, but it may be considerably more for an exceptional animal.

Live Animal Stock (Exports)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by year for the last 10 years, and by live animal stock *(a)* the number and *(b)* the value of stock exported by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: The number and value of live animal stock exported by the United Kingdom over the last 10 years are listed in the table.

	Bovine animals	*Sheep*	*Goats*	*Swine*	*Poultry*	*Horses, asses, mules and hinnies*
1980						
Number ('000)	370	393	1	298	10,928	11
Value (£'000)	52,437	11,700	18	16,713	9,989	48,996
1981						
Number ('000)	321	172	1	606	15,385	9
Value (£'000)	55,884	6,035	58	34,147	13,312	66,091
1982						
Number ('000)	287	146	1	619	13,296	9
Value (£'000)	48,810	5,276	113	41,164	12,002	71,563
1983						
Number ('000)	240	93	1	571	11,274	9
Value (£'000)	30,599	3,374	51	35,777	11,105	106,368
1984						
Number ('000)	234	101	1	346	9,110	9
Value (£'000)	29,158	3,163	46	22,377	10,225	125,891
1985						
Number ('000)	173	84	1	234	9,617	9
Value (£'000)	24,171	2,427	115	17,430	12,358	205,330
1986						
Number ('000)	213	195	1	134	9,040	9
Value (£'000)	29,591	6,832	52	12,554	11,789	238,976
1987						
Number ('000)	387	373	1	61	10,235	10
Value (£'000)	57,826	13,890	241	8,618	14,046	231,041
1988						
Number ('000)	267	509	1	59	12,788	7
Value (£'000)	44,438	24,741	66	8,949	15,301	154,146

	Bovine animals	Sheep	Goats	Swine	Poultry	Horses, asses, mules and hinnies
1989						
Number ('000)	330	589	[1]	115	13,599	7
Value (£'000)	54,218	28,033	41	16,212	19,276	140,431

[1] Less than half units shown.

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Equine Meat Trade

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to restrict or ban the trade in horse, pony and donkey meat between the United Kingdom and other countries; and if he will make a statement on his assessment of the impact of the European single market on the trade in horse meat after 1992.

Mr. Curry: We have no proposals to restrict or ban the trade in horse, pony and donkey meat between the United Kingdom and other countries. Any such action would be contrary to article 34 of the treaty of Rome and thus illegal. The Commission's proposals in respect of the single European market contain no items specifically relating to trade in horse meat but envisage that the trade will continue after 1992.

The United Kingdom intends to press strongly in the EC negotiations on the welfare of live animals in transit for provisions which discourage the export of live horses and ponies from the United Kingdom for slaughter.

DEFENCE

NATO (Out of Area)

15. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of the United Kingdom's armed forces in NATO's out-of-area capabilities.

47. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of the United Kingdom's armed forces in NATO's out-of-area capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO has no out-of-area role. The United Kingdom's armed forces do, however, maintain an out-of-area capability, as described in successive Statements on the Defence Estimates.

Community Charge

16. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from serving members of Her Majesty's forces about arrangements for paying the poll tax.

53. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from serving members of Her Majesty's forces about arrangements for paying the poll tax.

104. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from serving members of Her Majesty's forces about arrangements for paying the poll tax.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations about arrangements for the community charge.

Service Women

17. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to allow women into the Royal Horse Guards and the Royal Life Guards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Under the present deployment guidelines for women in the Army, women may be employed in peace and war in all posts except those where the primary role is direct combat. There are, therefore, no current plans for members of the WRAC to be employed in combat posts in the Household Cavalry, but other posts in these units may be open to them.

24. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to encourage the wider employment of service women.

113. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to encourage the wider employment of service women.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to encourage the wider employment of service women.

Mr. Tom King: We have over the last year announced plans to allow women to serve in surface ships of the Royal Navy; to increase the number of women in the Regular Army by up to 6,000 and to enable them to fill all posts other than those that would deploy to forward areas in war; to recruit women as pilots and navigators in the RAF; and to increase the number of women in ground trades in the RAF by 2,000. We are continuing to look for other areas of employment which may be opened up to women.

Land Holdings

18. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of his Department's current land holding; and what plans he has to acquire further land.

29. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of his Department's current land holding; and what plans he has to acquire further land.

65. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of his Department's current land holding; and what plans he has to acquire further land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

Northern Ireland

19. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the operations of those security forces in Northern Ireland responsible to him.

Mr. Tom King: The armed forces deployed in Northern Ireland in support of the RUC continue to make a substantial and essential contribution to the defeat of terrorism in the Province.

Trident

20. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the cost of the Trident programme is still to be expended; and what is his estimate of the annual running cost of one Trident submarine.

67. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the cost of the Trident programme is still to be expended; and what is his estimate of the annual running cost of one Trident submarine.

100. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the cost of the Trident programme is still to be expended; and what is his estimate of the annual running cost of one Trident submarine.

114. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the cost of the Trident programme is still to be expended; and what is his estimate of the annual running cost of one Trident submarine.

Mr. Alan Clark: Of the total currently estimated cost, about £6,000 million has yet to be spent, although some £2,000 million of that is already contractually committed. It is too early to say with any precision the likely running costs of the Trident force. They are not, however, expected to be significantly different from those of Polaris.

85. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made on the construction of the first two Vanguard-class Trident submarines.

Mr. Neubert: Construction of the first two Vanguard-class submarines at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. is well advanced.

22. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence told the House when announcing the revised Trident cost estimate on 31 January, the Trident programme continues to progress to time and budget towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s.

United States Defence Secretary

21. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart; and what was discussed.

25. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart; and what was discussed.

43. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart; and what was discussed.

52. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart; and what was discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I last met Mr. Cheney during my visit to Washington at the end of January. We discussed a range of current defence issues.

Ambulance Dispute

23. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of using the armed forces on civilian ambulance duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Up to 31 January 1990 the Ministry of Defence has identified extra costs in the region of £3·5 million for recovery from the Department of Health, the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Welsh Office.

Nuclear Test Veterans

26. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about compensation for nuclear test veterans.

51. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about compensation for nuclear test veterans.

98. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about compensation for nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of recent representations have been received from right hon. and hon. Members and others regarding compensation for nuclear test veterans.

NATO Ministers

27. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his NATO counterparts; and what was discussed.

58. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Defence Ministers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend last met his colleagues from the eastern members of NATO (except Iceland) at the independent European programme group meeting at Gleneagles on 21 February. The last meeting of NATO Defence Ministers was the defence planning committee on 28-29 November 1989. Copies of the communiqués issued after both meetings have been placed in the Library of the House.

28. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet his NATO colleagues; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will next meet his NATO colleagues at the defence nuclear planning group in early May when a range of defence issues will be discussed.

Eastern Europe

30. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been instituted to assess the military implications of political changes in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We keep the implications of political changes in eastern Europe under constant review. These changes are welcome and we look to the CFE process for reductions in military capabilities to provide enhanced security at the lower levels of forces which NATO has long sought.

82. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the recent developments in eastern Europe have caused his Department to reconsider its military commitments to NATO.

87. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the impact of recent events in eastern Europe on British defence commitments.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples).

European Defence Ministers

31. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the EUCLID meeting of European Defence Ministers on 20 and 21 February.

78. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the EUCLID meeting of European Defence Ministers on 20 and 21 February.

84. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the EUCLID meeting of European Defence Ministers on 20 and 21 February.

112. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the EUCLID meeting of European Defence Ministers on 20 and 21 February.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Defence Ministers of the independent European programme group (IEPG) nations met at Gleneagles on 21 February. Among other matters, they discussed the EUCLID European research and technology programme and expressed satisfaction at the progress made on the outlined plan for the programme and endorsed some of the principles which will govern how the work will be undertaken. They also endorsed the aim of having a memorandum of understanding ready for signature this year, and looked to nations to implement the programme as soon as possible thereafter. They welcomed the valuable relationship developing between the EUCLID governmental organisations and the European defence industries group (EDIG), and stressed its importance for the success of EUCLID.

A copy of the communiqué issued after the meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

NATO Policy

32. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has commissioned any studies into the effects of a change of policy in NATO from flexible response to minimum deterrence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO has always sought to ensure deterrence while maintaining only the essential minimum levels of nuclear and conventional forces. NATO's flexible response strategy is consistent with that aim and remains the best means of deterring any potential aggression, and thus guaranteeing peace and security.

Civil Community (Assistance)

33. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department has given to the civil community in the United Kingdom over the past year.

45. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department has given to the civil community in the United Kingdom over the past year.

79. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department has given to the civil community in the United Kingdom over the past year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The services are constantly engaged in providing assistance to the civil community in one form or another. This ranges from comparatively routine projects, such as the attachment of volunteers to social service organisations, through frequent explosive ordnance disposal operations to assistance in cases of accident or natural disaster. Over the last year notable examples of assistance have been the provision of temporary accommodation to house victims of the floods in north Wales and the loan of generators and chain-saws to help provide temporary power and restore lines of communication following the storms last January.

Equipment Expenditure

34. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of United Kingdom defence equipment expenditure is spent in the United Kingdom; and how many jobs are supported both directly and indirectly in British industry as a result of that expenditure.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989, volume 1, paragraph 401, and volume 2, table 6.8.

Air-to-Surface Missile

35. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans to deploy a new tactical air-to-surface missile.

88. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans to deploy a new tactical air-to-surface missile.

93. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans to deploy a new tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

Soviet Union

36. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has on the present military doctrine adopted in the Soviet general staff.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Recent statements by senior Soviet officials claim that since 1987, the Soviet Union's

military doctrine has been strictly defensive. It has been emphasised by the Soviet Chief of the General Staff that the main direction of his department's work is to make the armed forces unequivocally defensive. However, the internal debate in the USSR over the precise formulation of a new doctrine following the current and prospective force reductions in Europe continues.

66. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has on the policy of the Soviet general staff towards the doctrine of defence sufficiency.

120. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has on the policy of the Soviet general staff towards the doctrine of military sufficiency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 2 March, *Official Report*, column *382*.

Conventional Force Reductions

37. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has received any representations from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on the CFE talks.

46. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has received any representations from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on the CFE talks.

118. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has received any representations from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on the CFE talks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of letters, some of which have been inspired by CND, on many aspects of defence policy and arms control negotiations. However, I note that no recent representations have been received from CND on the most encouraging progress at the CFE talks towards a negotiated and verifiable agreement on conventional forces in Europe.

124. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department will make to the implementation of any CFE agreement.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department will make to the implementation of any CFE agreement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department will be participating fully in the implementation, including verification, of a CFE agreement.

127. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the CFE talks in Vienna.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Very substantial progress has been made in the CFE talks. NATO and the Warsaw pact have reached agreement on ceilings for tanks, helicopters and United States and Soviet stationed manpower in the central region. In the course of the latest round of negotiations in Vienna, which finished on 22 February, progress was made towards resolving the remaining differences, and NATO tabled detailed proposals on verification.

BAOR

38. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review he has undertaken of the future role of the British Army of the Rhine.

103. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review he has undertaken of the future role of the British Army of the Rhine.

126. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review he has undertaken of the future role of the British Army of the Rhine.

54. **Mr Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review he has undertaken of the future role of the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave today to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright).

102. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department intends changing the present balance between conventional and nuclear weapons in the British Army of the Rhine and RAF Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The balance between conventional and nuclear weapons in British forces Germany is kept under continuous review.

Nuclear Submarines

40. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the programme of inspection of submarine nuclear reactors.

57. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the programme of inspection of submarine nuclear reactors.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The programme of inspections to which the hon. Members refer is continuing.

RAF Bentwaters

41. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role he envisages for RAF Bentwaters.

42. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role he envisages for RAF Bentwaters.

106. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role he envisages for RAF Bentwaters.

123. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role he envisages for RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Bentwaters is a base for A-10 ground attack aircraft of the USAF. The F-16 aircraft of the USAF 527th "Aggressor" squadron were withdrawn fom the base recently. No decisions have been taken on any further changes to the role of the station.

RAF Greenham Common

44. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the future of RAF Greenham Common.

55. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the future of RAF Greenham Common.

101. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the future of RAF Greenham Common.

109. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the future of RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of letters from right hon. and hon. Members and members of the public have been received.

Duty Tours

48. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum and average length of tour of duty for personnel serving on *(a)* surface and *(b)* submarine duty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The normal maximum length of continuous sea service for a rating is 30 months (plus or minus three months), with a current average for both the surface and submarine flotillas of 21 months. For officers, the current policy is that sea appointments should not exceed two years or, when in command, 21 months. The current average is about 19 months.

Tilshead Flooding

49. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the flooding of land above and below the village of Tilshead in Wiltshire following the construction by the Army of causeways for military vehicles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the recent exceptional rainfall, a large quantity of water accumulated behind a causeway which crosses a valley north-east of Tilshead village. The defence land agent Durrington took immediate steps first to prevent and then to control the overflow of water down the valley by inserting culverts in the causeway. Subsequently the defence land agent and Army engineers took the precautionary step of strengthening the causeway in a complex overnight operation involving many individuals and organisations. Water has not been known to accumulate behind the causeway in the past and on this occasion its existence may well have prevented even worse flooding in Tilshead village.

Low Flying

50. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the National Audit Office report into low flying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Following the publication of the National Audit Office report, the accounting officer gave evidence on 21 February to the Public Accounts Committee. The Government now await the findings of the Committee.

70. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what increase or decrease there has been in the frequency of low flying military training aircraft in the Tamar valley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Records are not held of low flying military training activity over specific locations such as the Tamar valley. However, the total amount of low flying in the United Kingdom has been fairly constant in recent years.

Waste Disposal

59. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline his Department's waste disposal policy.

Mr. Alan Clark: When possible waste material is disposed of by sale. However, if the product requires specialised handling a contract is let to reputable companies for disposal at a licensed site.

Defence Industries

60. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any proposals to assist in the conversion of defence industries to civil production.

116. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any proposals to assist in the conversion of defence industries to civil production.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

Mr. Colin Wallace

61. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement into the progress of his Department's inquiry into its handling of papers relating to Mr. Colin Wallace.

63. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement into the progress of his Department's inquiry into its handling of papers relating to Mr. Colin Wallace.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The internal departmental inquiry is under way. The outcome of the inquiry will be reported to the House.

Nuclear Weapons

62. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed deployment of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts.

73. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed deployment of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts.

108. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed deployment of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East on 2 March, *Official Report*, column *382*.

Tornado

64. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department is taking to re-evaluate the role playable by the Tornado.

Mr. Alan Clark: The roles of all combat aircraft are kept under constant review.

Radiation Exposure

68. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications of recent findings on leukaemia risks arising from radiation exposure with regard to the protection of workers in defence establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 28 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *246*.

Volunteer Reserves

69. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made following the launch of his Department's campaign to recruit and retain members of the volunteer reserves.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current volunteer reserve forces campaign has as its prime aim improving retention in the reserve forces, although we would expect to see some measure of spin-off on recruitment. In addition to a widened public understanding of the importance of the volunteer reserves, there are encouraging signs that the campaign has made employers more aware of how the training offered in the volunteer reserves has relevance to civil employment and the benefits which they may gain thereby as a result of employee membership of the reserve forces. To date, more than 820 major employers, representing over half the United Kingdom work force, have pledged their support and we are confident that there has been a genuine reduction in the pressures which have acted against volunteer employees in the past.

107. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to increase the role of the volunteer reserves.

121. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to increase the role of the volunteer reserves.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The role of the volunteer reserves is kept under continuous review.

Holy Loch (Cruise Missiles)

71. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information he has received from the United States Administration about their intentions concerning the possible location of sea-launched cruise missiles at Holy Loch.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decision has yet been taken on the long-term use of the Holy Loch base. Any such decisions are a matter for discussion between the United Kingdom and United States Governments.

German Unification

72. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications of the unification of Germany.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications of the unification of Germany.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullins).

Departmental Savings

74. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what savings through competition and value for money his Department has achieved over the past year.

105. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what savings through competition and value for money his Department has achieved over the past year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department's commercial approach to defence procurement, including the greater emphasis on competition as part of the overall strategy of seeking value for money, has achieved substantial savings. It is, however, difficult to quantify those savings in the absence of information on the price that would have been achieved in other circumstances.

West German Defence Minister

75. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the West German Defence Minister; and what was discussed.

90. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the West German Defence Minister; and what was discussed.

117. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the West German Defence Minister; and what was discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend last met Dr. Stoltenberg at the meeting of the independent European programme group at Gleneagles on 21 February. They discussed a range of current defence issues.

Overseas Military Assistance

76. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military assistance to overseas Governments his Department has provided over the past year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During 1988-89 some 550 service personnel were on loan or seconded to 33 countries and more than 5,000 overseas students attended military training courses in the United Kingdom. This was supplemented by short-term training or advisory visits to over 40 countries to meet specific requirements.

Disarmament Conference

77. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part his Department is playing in the Geneva conference on disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *322*.

Chemical Defence Establishment

80. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget of the Chemical Defence Establishment.

92. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget of the Chemical Defence Establishment.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley).

Civil Service Relocation

81. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider further measures to reduce and transfer the number of civil servants employed in the various buildings of his Department in London.

Mr. Neubert: The overall number of MOD civilian employees in London has fallen by more than 11,000 since 1979. We are examining a number of proposals to transfer further work from London and announcements about these will be made in due course.

Royal Navy (New Ships)

83. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to order further ships for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Neubert: The Government will maintain the properly balanced maritime forces the Royal Navy needs to carry out its tasks. We have plans for sufficient orders to meet that commitment. For further information I refer my hon. Friend to the position that I described to the House in the Navy debate on 5 February, *Official Report*, columns 654-58.

Property Holdings

89. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses are owned by his Department; and how many are empty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 November 1989, the number of married quarters in the United Kingdom was 76,068, of which 12,423 were vacant. As at 31 December 1989 1,790 civilian houses were owned, of which 223 were vacant.

RAF Molesworth

91. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future role of RAF Molesworth.

110. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future role of RAF Molesworth.

125. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future role of RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) on 11 January at columns *691-92*.

YTS

94. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many YTS members are currently serving in each of the three services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1989 a total of 262 trainees were serving in the armed services YTS, two with the Royal Navy and 260 with the Royal Air Force.

NATO Secretary General

95. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Secretary General of NATO; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend last met Dr. Woerner at the NATO defence planning committee ministerial meeting held on 28-29 November 1989. The communiqué issued after the meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

99. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the Secretary General of NATO; and what matters he intends to raise.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend regularly meets the Secretary General of NATO. Their next scheduled meeting is at the NATO nuclear planning group in early May when a range of defence issues will be discussed.

Disabled Ex-Service Men

96. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has had about the level of payments for which his Department is responsible to ex-service men disabled during the course of their duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A small number of letters have been received which refer to the level of pensions received by ex-service men who have disabilities attributable to their service.

Challenger Tank

97. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the progress to date made by Vickers plc on the Challenger 2 prototype tank.

Mr. Alan Clark: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) on 28 November, *Official Report*, column 575, Vickers Defence Systems has satisfactorily passed the first milestone in the Challenger 2 Mk 2 demonstration phase.

Armed Forces (Redundancies)

111. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces he expects to be offered early redundancy in 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to make members of the armed forces redundant.

United States Forces

115. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effects on local communities he anticipates will result from the United States proposals regarding United States forces in Britain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The effect on local communities of changes in the deployment of United States forces in the United Kingdom is difficult to predict with any confidence, and will certainly vary widely from place to place.

NATO Maritime Defence

119. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Royal Navy plays in NATO's maritime defence.

122. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Royal Navy plays in NATO's maritime defence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friends to paragraph 302 of volume 1 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989.

Troops (Berlin)

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to reduce the number of British troops stationed in Berlin; what discussions he has had recently with representatives of the other countries *(a)* France, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, about possible troop reductions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces will continue to fulfil our responsibilities for the protection of Berlin in conjunction with those of other Allies and we have no plans at present to change the size of the Berlin garrison, which will remain in place for as long as it is needed. The future requirement for allied forces in Berlin is likely to be discussed in the talks which will begin shortly between the four powers and the two German states on external and security aspects of German unification.

Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his proposals for the future of the Horseshoe barracks in Shoeburyness.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are currently considering the options for disposing of Horseshoe barracks and reproviding facilities for which there is a continuing operational requirement, against the background of further advice from our planning consultants. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend when this process is complete.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether agreement has been reached with the other participating Governments on the development of the European fighter aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran).

Lance Missiles

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with Defence Ministers of the NATO countries about the stockpiling of follow-on to Lance missiles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the stockpiling of follow-on to Lance missiles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government fully support the Alliance's comprehensive concept of May 1989, in which it was agreed that a decision on the deployment of a replacement for the Lance missile system would not be taken until 1992.

Arms Reduction Verification

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to ensure a sufficient supply of personnel trained in arms reduction verification.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The joint arms control implementation group (JACIG) has recently been established, and will begin forming in July. It will be the United Kingdom's arms control verification organisation. The primary role of the JACIG will be to conduct CFE (conventional forces in Europe) and Stockholm document outgoing inspections. It will additionally provide escorts and interpreters for the incoming Stockholm document, INF (intermediate nuclear forces) and CFE inspections into the United Kingdom.

Those personnel conducting the verification task will receive equipment recognition training, instruction in the treaty and its several protocols and, where appropriate, formal language training. Practice inspections will also be conducted to ensure that the JACIG staff reach and maintain the necessary national and allied inspection standards.

Defence Savings

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has given any recent consideration to possible defence savings.

39. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has given any recent consideration to possible defence savings.

86. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has given any recent consideration to possible defence savings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the right hon. Member and his hon. Friends to the answer given at column 596 on 6 February 1990 to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 7 March 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the criteria he has adopted to determine the standard spending assessment for local education authorities in England and Wales for the year 1990-91; and, for each element, if he will quantify the relevant sums he deems appropriate for expenditure by the London borough of Newham in that financial year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The basis on which the education components of the standard spending assessments (SSAs) for 1990-91 for England and Wales are calculated is set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) and the Welsh Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report. Copies of both reports have been placed in the Library. The sectoral elements of the London borough of Newham's SSA for education are as follows:

	£ million
Primary Education	35·281
Secondary Education	35·105
Post-16 Education	14·772
Under 5 Education	7·251
Other Education	6·101
Total Education	98·510

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made any estimates of the amount by which Staffordshire county council would be required to reduce its education budget for 1990-91 if it were to spend at the level of its standard spending assessment for education; and whether he has made any assessment of the reductions in teaching staff and of spending on books at such a spending level.

Mr. MacGregor: It is for Staffordshire county council to reach its own conclusions on priorities within any particular level of spending.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any estimate of the reduction in teaching and non-teaching staffs and in non-pay items including school books and equipment which would be required if local education authorities in England brought their spending in 1990-91 to the level of their standard spending assessments for education.

Mr. MacGregor: It is for individual authorities to determine their own priorities for expenditure.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the additional administrative costs falling upon higher education institutions of *(a)* the proposed student loans scheme, *(b)* the proposed access funds and *(c)* the payment of tuition fees in three instalments rather than one.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are considering what rôle the higher education institutions might play in securing access to the top-up loans for their students. It is not expected that administration of the access funds will add noticeably to the costs of institutions' student advisory services. The additional costs of the termly payment of tuition fees are expected to be negligible.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is sub-contracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are at present 14 internal auditors in the Department. The total staffing cost of the Department's internal audit division, including travel and subsistence, training and the cost of support staff, is estimated at £405,000 in the present financial year. In addition, £12,000 has been spent in the present year on bought-in support from private firms to achieve economic and effective audit coverage, particularly in computer areas. The audit plan for 1989-90 covers 60 discrete audit areas; reports are issued on each assignment. Two of the reports have been drawn to the attention of Ministers.

Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much he has allocated for spending on the closure of the Institute of Food Research at Bristol: and from which year's allocation it will come.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend announced his allocation of the science budget in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 10 January 1990 at columns *623-24*. It is for the research councils to determine how much they will spend from their allocations for any particular purpose.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has been allocated to Staffordshire county council for teacher training on drug abuse and for anti-drug co-ordinators.

Mr. Alan Howarth: For the financial year 1990-91, Staffordshire education authority will receive grant aid on education support grant expenditure of £66,500 on preventive health education, and on expenditure of £69,000 under the associated LEA training grants scheme national priority area. Both these programmes cover education about drug abuse.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the total cost of the proposed phased implementation of the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay in 1990-91; what was the corresponding figure in the remit to the committee; and who will be responsible for funding any difference between these two figures.

Mr. MacGregor: The additional cost in 1990-91 of implementing the IAC's recommendations in the way I have proposed would be £620 million in England and Wales, compared with the financial constraint set out in the IAC's remit of £600 million. The difference should not be an appreciable burden for local authorities given the scope that exists for savings across their services.

Disabled Students

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations his Department has received regarding a fourth access fund for disabled students.

Mr. Jackson: Representations in favour of such a fund have been made by several hon. Members and organisations representing disabled people.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make a statement on the revised arrangements for the disabled students' allowance.

Mr. Jackson: Shortly.

Disabled Graduates

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what representations his Department has received regarding the disposable income level of disabled graduates;

(2) whether his Department has carried out any research into the disposable income levels of disabled graduates.

Mr. Jackson: The Department has received a number of representations from organisations representing the interests of disabled people. A few have provided evidence in support of their claim that disabled graduates will be at a disadvantage when repaying top-up loans. We have also examined evidence from the OPCS surveys of disability in Great Britain.

University Lecturers

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the real increase in the earnings of university lecturers over the last decade, over the previous decade and over the two decades combined; and if he will set out in a table *(a)* the salary of a university lecturer at the top of the lecturers' scale, *(b)* the retail prices index and *(c)* average United Kingdom earnings for (i) the 1970s, (ii) the 1980s and (iii) the two periods combined.

Mr. Jackson: Data for total earnings of university lecturers are not available. The following table shows lecturers' salaries in actual and real terms in comparison with the retail prices index and average earnings over the periods (i) April 1970 to April 1979 (ii) April 1979 to April 1989 and (iii) April 1970 to April 1989:

Earnings and Prices Levels

Year (April)	*Lecturer maximum salary (£)*[1]	*Retail prices index*[2]	*Average United Kingdom earnings (£)*[3]	*Real terms lecturers' salaries*[4]	*Real terms average United Kingdom earnings*[4]
1970	3,105	100	1,347	3,105	1,347
1979	8,452	295·4	4,633	2,861	1,568
1989[4]	[5]20,469	621·9	12,464	3,291	2,004

Percentage Increases

	Lecturers' salaries (cash)	*Retail prices index*	*Average United Kingdom earnings (cash)*	*Lecturers' salaries (real terms)*	*Average earnings (real terms)*
April 1970-April 1979	172	195·4	244	−8	16
April 1979-April 1989	[5]142	110·5	169	15	28
April 1970-April 1989	[5]559	521·9	825	6	49

[1] Excludes non salary earnings.
[2] Based on April 1970 = 100.
[3] Average earnings for all occupations males and females combined, excluding those whose pay has been affected by absence. Figures are on a full-time adult rates basis and are taken from the new earnings survey.
[4] April 1990 salary data not yet available.
[5] Excludes maximum of discretionary range = £22,872 effective from 1 October 1989. Inclusion of this attainable maximum salary indicates 171 per cent. increase during the period April 1979-October 1989, and 637 per cent. increase during the period April 1970-October 1989.
[6] Both at April 1970 prices.

PRIME MINISTER

Visits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Newham.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Inner Cities Initiative

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list by project the £4 billion expenditure announced for the inner cities on 28 February; how much was already approved and how much was additional moneys; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that he received today from my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities [column *734*.]

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of *(a)* her official visit to Bradford and west Yorkshire on 28 February and *(b)* the inner cities launch and television link-up on that date.

The Prime Minister: The costs of visits of this nature are not readily identifiable. The final cost of the inner cities launch and TV link-up on 28 February is not yet known, but is likely to average about £15,000 for each of the seven centres involved.

Travel Expenditure

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total expenditure in travel for her and her staff *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* to countries outside the United Kingdom in 1989 and 1990 to the most recent practicable date; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of my travel and that of my staff in the United Kingdom in 1989-90 to date is £378,663. The total cost to countries outside the United Kingdom is £258,403.

ENERGY

Property Sale, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will issue a direction to British Coal to prevent the sale to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers below market prices of the property known as "The Sycamores," Nottinghamshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Coal that the sale has already taken place. In any case, the disposal of assets belonging to British Coal is a matter for the corporation's management.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what expenditure over the next three years is planned by his Department for development of *(a)* nuclear power, *(b)* tidal power and *(c)* wind power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Figures for the Department's most recent expenditure plans for 1990-91 to 1992-93 are set out in chapter 5 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1005). These show that in 1990-91 the Department plans to spend £126·4 million on nuclear research and development (including some restructuring costs), and £20·3 million on research and development on renewable sources of energy, including £7 million on wind energy and £1·2 million on tidal energy.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the basis for the statement by the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) that Britain was at the bottom of the league on energy efficiency in June 1984; and what assessment he has made of evidence that Britain was achieving the target of being at the top of the league by the end of that Parliament.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The statement by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) was designed to encourage efforts to improve the United Kingdom's energy efficiency, not to set operational measures of performance. The United Kingdom's performance over the period 1983 to 1987 matched, and in some cases exceeded, that of most other countries, as the following table shows:

Total Primary Energy Requirement/GDP ratio (Tonnes of oil equivalent per $1,000 GDP at 1985 prices)

	GDP ratio
1983	
Japan	0·28
Switzerland	0·29
Denmark	0·31
Italy	0·34
France	0·37
Austria	0·41
West Germany	0·43
United Kingdom	0·45
Spain	0·46
United States of America	0·48
Finland	0·49
Ireland	0·49
Netherlands	0·49
Norway	0·49
Iceland	0·51
Australia	0·52
Belgium	0·52
Sweden	0·52
Greece	0·54
New Zealand	0·55
Portugal	0·62
Canada	0·68
Turkey	0·78
Luxembourg	0·93
1987	
Japan	0·26
Switzerland	0·28
Italy	0·33
Denmark	0·34
France	0·38
West Germany	0·42
United Kingdom	0·43
Spain	0·43
Austria	0·44
United States of America	0·44
Norway	0·46
Australia	0·48
Iceland	0·49
Ireland	0·50
Netherlands	0·51
Sweden	0·54
Finland	0·54
Belgium	0·55
Greece	0·57
Portugal	0·62
New Zealand	0·63
Canada	0·64
Turkey	0·80
Luxembourg	0·85

Source: "Energy Balances of OECD countries 1986-87" OECD 1989.
Note: These energy ratios are determined by many factors, including climate and industrial structure.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Wakeham: There are 10 internal auditors in the Department of Energy, including the head of internal audit. The total cost of the unit is £185,000 per annum. Fifteen reports were produced in 1989, none of which was brought directly to the attention of a Minister. No internal audit work is contracted to private firms; it is a completely internal professional service.

Fuel Exports and Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide figures for January 1990 of fuel exports and imports equivalent to those given in his answers of 9 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *767* and 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *118-19*.

Mr. Wakeham: The equivalent information for fuel exports and imports for January 1990 as set out in my previous answers on 9 November 1989, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*, and 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *118-19*, is as follows:

Table 1
January 1990

	Thousand tonnes
Exports (f.o.b.)	
Coal	269
Oil[1]	7,472
Imports (c.i.f.)	
Coal	1,194
Gas[2]	1,462
Oil	6,523

Table 2
January 1990

	£ million at 1985 prices[3]
Exports (f.o.b.)	
Coal	10
Oil[1]	1,274
Imports (c.i.f.)	
Coal	64
Gas	55
Oil	1,052

Note:
It should be noted that these figures exclude exports and imports of other solid fuels and electricity.
[1] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.
[2] Coal equivalent.
[3] Figures at 1985 constant prices have been derived by applying the unit value for exports in 1985 to the relevant volumes in 1990.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Attorney-General how many internal auditors are employed in those departments for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

The Attorney-General: Internal audit coverage for departments for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible is as follows: the Lord Chancellor's Department, including the Public Record Office; the Northern Ireland Court Service and the Land Registry. For the financial year 1988-89 the figures requested are:

	Number of auditors	*Cost* £	*Audit reports produced*	*Sub-contract work—Computer Auditor Consultants*	*Cost* £
Lord Chancellor's Department	27·5	594,660	39	—	16,000
Northern Ireland Court Service	5	98,700	25	None	—
Land Registry	6	117,569	19	None	—

No reports have been drawn to the attention of the Lord Chancellor by internal audit. The head of internal audit reports to the accounting officer.

THE ARTS

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many internal auditors are employed in his office and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to his attention; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Luce: No internal auditors are employed by the Office of Arts and Libraries. Internal audit services are, however, provided by the Cabinet Office team at no cost to the Office of Arts and Libraries. Two internal audit reports were produced in 1989 as part of a predetermined cycle of audit reviews, neither of which was drawn to my attention. No internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Anti-dumping Duties

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list details of *(a)* successful anti-cartel actions which have been taken by the European Commission over the last 10 years, indicating whether the products involved were subject to anti-dumping duties and *(b)* anti-cartel actions which have been taken by the European Commission over the last 10 years which have resulted in an agreement between the Commission and the cartel in order to preclude action, indicating whether the products involved were subject to anti-dumping duties.

Mr. Redwood: Details of cases in which the European Commission has taken decisions are listed in the table. In a much larger number of cases the Commission has negotiated satisfactory undertakings which have precluded the need for action, but these are not usually made public.

In the two cases asterisked, certain imports from third countries of the products involved were, during the period

of the infringements, subject to anti-dumping duties. This may also have been so in some other cases but, if so, those cases are not readily identifiable.

Cartels found by the European Commission (since 1980) to have infringed the EC competition rules

Case	*Date of decision*	*Publication*[1]
Bundesverband Deutscher Stahlhandel eV (rolled steel)	8 February 1980	1980 L62
French and German special steel producers	27 March 1980	Bulletin of the EC 3-1980
IMA-Statuut (plywood)	18 September 1980	1980 L318
Italian cast glass	17 December 1980	1980 L383
Italian flat glass	29 September 1980	1981 L326
VBBB/VBVB (books)	25 November 1981	1982 L54
ANSEAU-NAVEWA (water)	17 December 1981	1982 L167
SSI (tobacco)	15 July 1982	1982 L232
Rolled zinc products and zinc alloys	14 December 1982	1982 L362
AROW/BNIC (cognac)	14 December 1982	1982 L362
Vimpoltu (agricultural and horticultural machinery)	13 July 1983	1983 L200
Cast iron and steel rolls	17 October 1983	1983 L317
IPTC Belgium (washing machines and dishwashers)	5 December 1983	1983 L376
Flat glass sector Benelux	23 July 1984	1984 L212
Zinc Producer Group	6 August 1984	1984 L220
Peroxygen products	23 November 1984	1985 L35
Fire insurance	5 December 1984	1985 L35
Milchförderungsfonds (milk products)	7 December 1984	1985 L35
Woodpulp	19 December 1984	1985 L85
Aluminium	19 December 1984	1985 L92
Siemens/Fanuc (numerical controls etc.)	18 December 1985	1985 L376
Polypropylene	23 April 1986	1986 L230
Roofing felt	10 July 1986	1986 L232
Meldoc (dairies)	26 November 1986	1986 L348
Fatty acids	2 December 1986	1987 L3
Verenigde Bloemenveilingen Aalsmeer (flowers)	26 July 1988	1988 L262
Hudson's Bay/Dansk Pelsdyravlerforening (furs)	28 October 1988	1988 L316
Flat glass—Italy	7 December 1988	1989 L33
Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)*	21 December 1988	1989 L74
Low-density polyethylene*	21 December 1988	1989 L74
Welded steel mesh	2 August 1989	1989 L260

[1] Official Journal of the EC unless otherwise indicated.

Recycling

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to move from material specification to performance specification in respect of British Standards in order to allow a greater use of recycled material.

Mr. Ridley: The Department's Warren Spring laboratory has identified the historical emphasis upon material specification for standards as a significant barrier to the development of markets for recycled materials, and a shift towards performance specification would begin to undermine that barrier. The whole question of standards

has been identified as a key area for discussion by the recycling advisory group, set up to help to develop a national approach to recycling and to propose means of increasing United Kingdom recycling rates. The group is due to present its recommendations shortly and these will be carefully considered by the Government.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to amend British Standard 5750 to allow a greater use of recycled material.

Mr. Ridley: The question of standards has been identified as a key area for discussion by the recycling advisory group, set up to help develop a national approach to recycling and to propose means of increasing United Kingdom recycling rates. The group is due to present its recommendations shortly and these will be carefully considered by the Government.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the recycling advisory group to report on its consideration of recycling of domestic and industrial waste.

Mr. Ridley: The group is expected to complete the current phase of its work before the end of May.

Company Audits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring forward legislation to require all organisations seeking the status of a qualifying body under the Companies Act 1989 to issue recommended reading lists to their students.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will legislate to require all auditors of all companies to detect fraud and report it to the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Redwood: No, but I hope that all auditors will apply the guidance in the newly issued auditing guideline on the auditor's responsibility in relation to fraud, other irregularities and errors.

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those of his Department's inspectors' reports completed since January 1979 that have taken four years or longer to be published.

Mr. Redwood: There have been no reports completed since 1979 for which the date of publication is four years or more later than the date of the report.

Departmental Structure

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on his plans for the future structure of his Department, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *783-4*.

Mr. Ridley: None, as of 5 March 1990.

Accounting Standards Task Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the sources of funding for the accounting standards task group.

Mr. Redwood: The sources of funding for the accounting standards task group are my Department and the Bank of England. In addition, two major accountancy firms are respectively providing the services of a senior manager and a secretary.

Postal Services

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the efficiency of the postal services.

Mr. Ridley: The Post Office has set itself a target for this year to deliver 3 per cent. more letters on average by the next day. I welcome this commitment. Its real unit costs fell by 4·6 per cent. over the last target period, the three years to 29 March 1989.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Redwood: My Department employs 32 internal auditors at a cost of £786,000 a year. In 1989, 54 final internal audit reports were produced; none of these was referred to a Minister. No internal audit work is contracted out to private firms at the present time.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's child care network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The report was prepared for the European Commission which has not yet developed any proposals. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom's policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents, who wish to do so, can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government, through the Department of Health and the ministerial group on women's issues, have encouraged the development of a range of high quality child care options for both parents and employers.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what record was kept by an official of his Department of the information given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North on 6 December 1988 by the chairman of British Shipbuilders concerning the financial support available from the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union for the north-south bridge consortium which was bidding to acquire North East Shipbuilders Limited; and what steps have subsequently been taken to check the accuracy of this information.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 February 1990]*: The view taken by British Shipbuilders and its financial advisers was that the proposal received from the north-south bridge consortium did not provide the basis for a viable future for merchant shipbuilding in the Sunderland yards. This was irrespective of whether the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union had been able to confirm an oral indication of £10 million towards the consortium's capital provision. The Department's financial advisers agreed with this assessment. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster took account of all relevant considerations in reaching the decisions announced on 7 December 1988. The Department's records refer to sources of finance available to the consortium. Given the view taken of the proposal as a whole, there was no point in inviting financial advisers to investigate the GMBATU indication.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drink Driving

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the national organisations responding to his consultation paper on possible changes to the breath testing legislation that were in favour of the police being given powers to conduct random breath testing either within the prescribed context of a roadside checkpoint or in the context of them being given unfettered discretion powers;

(2) if he will make a statement on the outcome of his consultation on changes to the breath testing legislation;

(3) if he will place copies of responses from organisations to his consultation exercise on breath testing legislation in the Library.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 1 February 1989 at column *252*, the following national organisations wrote to the Home Office to express support for extended police powers to conduct roadside breath tests, either in the form of unfettered discretion or some other form:

Alcohol Concern
Association of Industrial Road Safety Officers
Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Automobile Association
Baptist Union of Great Britain
British Medical Association
British Safety Council
Campaign Against Drinking and Driving
Churches Council on Alcohol and Drugs
County Surveyors' Society
Cyclists Touring Club
Guild of Experienced Motorists
Institute of Incorporated Highway Engineers
Justices' Clerks' Society
K-DOOR (Keep Death Off Our Roads)
Liberty
Magistrates' Association
Medical Commission on Accident Prevention
National Council of Women
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety
Police Federation (England and Wales)
Police Superintendents' Association (England and Wales)
Royal College of Community Medicine
Royal College of Midwives
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Scotland's Campaign Against Irresponsible Drivers
Scottish Accident Prevention Council
Scottish Council on Alcohol
Scottish Police Federation

We have considered carefully these and other responses received and we intend shortly to announce our conclusions.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve drivers' perception of the actual risk of being detected for excess alcohol.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Regular surveys carried out on behalf of the Department of Transport indicate a marked change in public attitudes towards drinking and driving in recent years. This included an increased awareness of the risk of being caught. This is borne out by the publication on 7 February of statistics of roadside breath tests for the 12 months to September 1989. They show that while the overall level of breath testing continues to rise, there is a continuing downward trend in the proportion of positive tests. A copy of the relevant Home Office statistical bulletin (4/90) is in the Library.

The Government encourage chief constables to make full use of police powers to require roadside breath tests. The efforts of the police will be further reinforced by the Government's drinking and driving campaigns to be launched again this year during the summer and at Christmas.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is sub-contracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Waddington: Twenty-one internal auditors, including three support staff, were employed as at 1 October 1989. The annual cost is estimated at £524,000.

In the current financial year 31 reports have been issued. One assignment was partly contracted out to a private firm at a cost of £30,000. One internal audit report was specifically drawn to the attention of a Minister. More generally, internal audit findings and recommendations which are relevant to issues that Ministers are considering are reported to them in the context of submissions on those issues, but information on the number of reports thus drawn to the attention of Ministers is not readily available.

Ministerial Visits (Security)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the police and security operation for the visit to Bradford and west Yorkshire by the Prime Minister on 28 February.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of west Yorkshire that the additional police costs for the visit were £7,132.

Political Asylum (Chinese Citizens)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Chinese diplomats applied for political asylum in the United Kingdom since June 1989; and what action was taken in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Four Chinese diplomats applied for political asylum in the United Kingdom in 1989. All were granted refugee status.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for political asylum have been received within the last 12 months from Chinese citizens residing in the United Kingdom; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the following table:

Applications[1] received for refugee status by Chinese nationals subsequent to their entry to the United Kingdom, and decisions[1] on such applications, 1989.

	Number
Applications	52
Decisions	15
Granted refugee status	10
Granted exceptional leave	5
Refused refugee status or exceptional leave	—

[1] Provisional figures which may be underestimates.

These figures do not include Chinese nationals who apply to remain here on an exceptional basis, and are being allow to stay under the terms of the announcement to the House on 20 December 1989, at column *274*.

Suspects' Rights

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a statement as to the Government's proposals on the right of silence.

Mr. John Patten: We are still considering the comments we have received on the report of the departmental working group on the right of silence. I cannot yet say when we shall be ready to announce proposals.

HEALTH

General Practitioners

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of general practitioners per 1,000 population for *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Greater Manchester area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of general practitioners per 1,000 population for England and Wales at 1 October 1988 (the latest data for which figures are available) was 0·54. The figure at 1979 was 0·46.

The information requested is collected from family practitioner committees (FPCs), which are not necessarily coterminous with metropolitan boundaries. The number of GPs per 1,000 population in the areas covered by the FPCs which cover the Greater Manchester metropolitan area was 0·51 at 1 October 1988 and 0·44 at 1 October 1979.

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table of the numbers of laundry, cleaning, catering and security contracts awarded in-house and externally each year since 1983 in each health authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Freeman: Information held centrally is readily available in the form requested only on a regional health authority basis and is shown in the tables. It represents the results of the initial tendering exercises undertaken following the launch in late 1983 of the Government's competitive tendering initiative for domestic, catering and laundry services.

Similar information is not held centrally for other services.

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Laundry Services
Table of Contracts Awarded In-House and Externally by Region since 1983

Year ending 31 December

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*Total*
Northern							
In	1	3	4	5	—	—	13
Out	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
Yorkshire							
In	—	5	2	1	1	—	9
Out	1	—	—	1	1	—	3
Trent							
In	1	3	6	—	1	—	11
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
East Anglia							
In	1	—	—	2	—	—	3
Out	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
North West Thames							
In	3	4	—	—	—	1	8
Out	—	—	2	—	—	1	3
North East Thames							
In	3	3	4	—	1	1	12
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
South West Thames							
In	1	4	1	1	2	—	9
Out	6	1	—	2	—	—	9
South East Thames							
In	—	2	2	3	2	—	9
Out	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Wessex							
In	—	6	1	3	—	—	10
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Oxford							
In	—	—	1	1	—	1	3
Out	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
South West							
In	6	3	2	1	—	—	12
Out	2	—	1	—	—	—	3
West Midlands							
In	—	1	5	9	2	—	17
Out	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Mersey							
In	—	1	4	—	—	1	6
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
North West							
In	—	4	3	8	1	—	16
Out	—	—	—	1	1	—	2
SHAs							
In	—	2	1	1	—	—	4
Out	—	3	—	—	—	—	3
Totals							
In	16	41	36	35	10	4	142
Out	13	6	4	4	2	1	30

Domestic Services

Table of contracts awarded in-house and externally by region since 1983

Year ending 31 December

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Totals
Northern							
In	—	16	27	17	1	—	61
Out	1	1	1	2	—	—	5
Yorkshire							
In	—	16	21	5	1	—	43
Out	1	5	5	2	1	—	14
Trent							
In	—	34	47	18	—	—	99
Out	—	5	2	—	—	—	7
East Anglia							
In	—	12	5	3	—	—	20
Out	4	2	2	1	—	—	9
North West Thames							
In	—	6	16	4	—	3	29
Out	1	8	9	1	1	—	20
North East Thames							
In	—	12	24	11	3	1	51
Out	2	7	9	1	—	—	19
South West Thames							
In	3	12	10	4	1	—	30
Out	7	10	3	1	1	—	22
South East Thames							
In	—	12	19	14	4	1	50
Out	9	1	1	—	1	2	14

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Totals
Wessex							
In	—	12	36	11	—	—	59
Out	—	2	5	1	—	—	8
Oxford							
In	—	12	8	5	2	—	27
Out	6	1	4	1	—	—	12
South West							
In	1	12	17	9	—	—	39
Out	—	2	2	4	1	—	9
West Midlands							
In	—	30	52	32	6	—	120
Out	—	12	1	2	—	—	15
Mersey							
In	—	13	5	5	—	—	23
Out	—	7	4	1	—	—	12
North West							
In	—	16	47	17	1	—	81
Out	—	1	8	5	—	1	15
SHAs							
In	—	2	—	1	—	1	4
Out	2	—	2	2	—	—	6
Totals							
In	4	217	334	156	19	6	736
Out	33	64	58	24	5	3	187

Catering

Table of contracts awarded in-house and externally by region since 1983

Year ending 31 December

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
Northern							
In	—	9	12	8	—	—	29
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Yorkshire							
In	1	7	14	7	—	—	29
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Trent							
In	—	10	28	13	1	3	55
Out	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
East Anglia							
In	—	1	3	1	—	—	5
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
North West Thames							
In	—	7	4	—	—	—	11
Out	—	1	3	—	—	—	4
North East Thames							
In	—	5	4	4	1	1	15
Out	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
South West Thames							
In	1	8	13	3	4	—	29
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
South East Thames							
In	1	10	8	6	2	1	28
Out	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
Wessex							
In	—	6	20	9	—	—	35
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Oxford							
In	—	3	2	—	—	—	25
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
South West							
In	—	10	9	5	—	—	24
Out	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
West Midlands							
In	—	19	29	21	3	—	72
Out	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Mersey							
In	1	4	9	3	—	—	17
Out	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
North West							
In	—	16	15	17	1	—	49
Out	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
SHAs							
In	—	—	1	—	2	—	3
Out	1	—	—	1	—	1	3
Totals							
In	4	115	171	97	14	5	406
Out	2	3	4	2	1	2	14

Rates

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in what manner under the current rating system *(a)* National Health Service property and *(b)* private hospitals are assessed;

(2) in what manner, for the purposes of the uniform business rate *(a)* National Health Service property and *(b)* independent hospitals, will be assessed.

Mr. Freeman: NHS property is occupied by the Crown and is thus exempt from rates. However, contributions in lieu of rates are paid on the same basis as though the property were rateable. The Treasury valuer determines the values of NHS property for rating purposes, applying the principles laid down in rating legislation and agrees these with the representative of the rating authority; the contribution is then calculated by applying the local rate poundage to the value. Similar principles will apply to the determination of contributions in lieu of rates after 1 April 1990; the Treasury valuer has revalued all non-domestic NHS property for this purpose.

Private and independent hospitals are rateable and are assessed by the valuation office in accordance with the relevant legislation. This will continue after 1 April 1990.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the number of deaths from cervical cancer in 1988; and how many of these deaths were of women aged 65 years and over.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table:

Number of deaths from cervical cancer[1] by age-groups in England and Wales, 1988

Age-group	Number of deaths
All ages	1,942
65 and over	967

[1] Assigned to 9th revision International Classification of Diseases (ICD) code 180.

When invasive cervical cancer develops from initial pre-cancerous change in cells of the cervix this generally takes, on average, over 10 years. Therefore, we would expect some time to elapse before the call and recall programme reduces the mortality in the 65 years and over age group. Our guidance to health authorities states that women aged 65 years and over who have not had two consecutive negative smears in the last 10 years should be screened. The new GPs' contract, which places a much greater emphasis on health promotion and ill health prevention, should provide additional opportunities for GPs to offer a cervical smear test to women in this age group when appropriate.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the prevalence of encephalopathy amongst patients identified as suffering from AIDS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not recorded as part of the reporting system for AIDS cases. I am advised that there are a number of reports about encephalopathy in people with AIDS in the scientific literature. These show varying prevalence rates which may reflect different patient populations and diagnostic criteria.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will set up a national fund to finance the provision of drugs and treatment for illnesses requiring long-term treatment such as AIDS; what representations he has received on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The costs of treatment and drugs for HIV disease and for other long-term illnesses will continue to be financed as now, by means of allocations to health authorities or through the family practitioner services, as appropriate. Pressures on services, such as those caused by HIV disease will continue to be taken into account in assessing the overall funding requirements of the NHS. There are no plans to set up a separate national fund for any specific group of illnesses; we have received no representations suggesting this course of action.

Leukaemia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each nuclear plant in the United Kingdom, the number of children who have been treated for

leukaemia; and if he will show in his answer the percentage whose parents were or have been employees at a nuclear plant.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available. However, following a recommendation from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment last year, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) is proposing to link the data on the national register of radiation workers with information on the geographical distribution of childhood cancer held by the childhood cancer research group at Oxford. We are urgently considering this and other related research proposals. A large amount of parallel research has already been commissioned by Government, which has either been completed, or is under way or planned.

Milk Tokens

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance his Department is giving to people who claim free milk tokens, but where milk distributors in their area refuse to accept them.

Mr. Freeman: Any beneficiary whose usual supplier refuses to accept milk tokens can seek information from the local social security office about alternative suppliers in the locality prepared to accept tokens. Where, exceptionally, the local office is satisfied that a token cannot be exchanged for milk a beneficiary can, as previously, be given a payment in lieu.

General Household Survey

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) further to table 3.20 of the general household survey 1986, whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, for 1986 and the latest year for which figures are available, the population in each country corresponding to the percentages given for the total of (i) two-adult households together with a subdivision by family size and (ii) three or more adults together with a subdivision showing the families by number of adults, distinguishing those where the adults are children aged less than 18 years and the proportion of such children in full-time education;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, for 1986 and the latest year for which figures are available, the population in each country corresponding to the percentages given for the totals in table 3.20 of the general household survey 1986 together with (i) a subdivision of single-adult households between males and females and (ii) the number of parents with children in each case under (i).

Mr. Freeman: Not all the requested information is available, but the following tables give such data as can be provided.

1. Table 1 gives an analysis by country of the total column of Table 3.20 in the 1986 GHS annual report updated to 1987. These are the latest figures available.

2. Table 3.20 in the 1986 report shows the proportion of adults (aged 16 or over) living in households of various types. The category "2 adults aged 16-59" consists of two-person households in which both members are in the specified age-group and consequently, by definition, excludes households with children. All households containing children are subsumed in this table under the classes, "Youngest person aged 0-4" and "Youngest person aged 5-15". Such households will contain varying numbers of adults.

3. Table 2 shows, in column (a), the percentage of all households in Great Britain consisting of one adult and one child, one adult and two children, etc. Households containing two adults are distinguished by whether they are of different sexes or the same sex. Column (b) gives the same information but with the percentages based on all households containing children under 16 rather than on all households of any kind. These figures are not available for the three countries separately.

4. Table 3(a) shows the proportions of families[1] in Great Britain headed by married couples (or married mothers whose husbands are temporarily absent), by lone fathers, or by lone mothers, with one, two, and three or more dependent children. Table 3(b) repercentages the data to show the proportions of families with one, two, and three or more dependent children headed by a married couple, a lone father, or a lone mother. These data are not available by country.

[1] In the GHS, a "family" is defined as (a) a married or cohabiting couple on their own or (b) a married or cohabiting couple/lone parent and their never-married children, provided that these children have no children of their own.

Table 1: Equivalent of Table 3.20 GHS 1987 Report
Household members aged 16 and over: household type by sex and country

Persons aged 16 and over — *Great Britain: 1987 per cent.*

Household type	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
MEN				
1 adult aged 16-59	5	5	4	5
2 adults aged 16-59	15	13	13	15
Youngest person aged 0-4 / Youngest person aged 5-15	34	32	35	34
3 or more adults	25	24	31	26
2 adults, 1 or both aged 60 or over	17	20	14	17
1 adult aged 60 or over	4	5	4	4
Base = 100 per cent.	8,542	449	896	9,887
WOMEN				
1 adult aged 16-59	3	3	4	3
2 adults aged 16-59	14	11	12	14
Youngest person aged 0-4 / Youngest person aged 5-15	33	32	34	33
3 or more adults	21	19	23	21
2 adults, 1 or both aged 60 or over	17	19	14	17
1 adult aged 60 or over	12	15	13	12
Base = 100 per cent.	9,310	549	1,017	10,876
TOTAL				
1 adult aged 16-59	4	4	4	4
2 adults aged 16-59	15	12	12	14

Household type	England	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
Youngest person aged 0-4 Youngest person aged 5-15	33	32	34	33
3 or more adults	23	22	27	23
2 adults, 1 or both aged 60 or over	17	19	14	17
1 adult aged 60 or over	8	11	9	8
Base = 100 per cent.	17,852	998	1,913	20,763

Table 2
Households with children by type of household
Households with children *Great Britain: 1987*

Household type	As percentage of total households (a) in the sample		(b) with children	
1 adult + 1 child	1		4	
1 adult + 2 children	1		3	
1 adult + 3+ children	1		2	
2 adults (different sex) + 1 child	7	8	23	25
2 adults (same sex) + 1 child	[1]		1	
2 adults (different sex) + 2 children	10	10	33	34
2 adults (same sex) + 2 children	[1]		[1]	
2 adults (different sex) + 3+ children	4	4	12	12
2 adults (same sex) + 3+ children	[1]		[1]	
3 adults, 1 child	3		9	
3 adults, 2 children	1		4	
3 adults, 3+ children	[1]		1	
4+ adults, at least 1 child	2		6	
Base = 100 per cent.	10,367		3,161	

[1] Less than 0·5 per cent.

Table 3
Families by type and number of dependent children
Families with dependent children *Great Britain: 1987*

(a) Number of dependent children	Family type: Married couple[2]	Lone mother	Lone father	All families with dependent children
1	40	57	[3]63	42
2	44	28	[3]35	42
3 or more	16	16	[3]3	16
Base = 100 per cent.	2,909	412	40	3,361
(b)	Base = 100 per cent.			
1	82	16	2	1,418
2	91	8	1	1,399
3 or more	88	12	[4]	544
Total	87	12	1	3,361

[1] Dependent children are persons under 16 or aged 16-18 and in full-time education, in the family unit, and living in the household.
[2] Including married women whose husbands were not defined as resident in the household.
[3] These percentages should be treated with caution because of the small base.
[4] Less than 0·5 per cent.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many internal auditors are employed in those departments for which he is responsible and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Freeman: An average of 22 internal auditors were engaged in the internal audit of the Department of Health and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1989. The estimated cost was £498,000 including superannuation and training. Thirty-five audit reports were produced in 1989. No audit reports were drawn to the attention of Ministers, but the results of internal audit's work are considered by the audit committees of both Departments and the accounting officers receive an annual summary of the principal audit findings and recommendations. No internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms.

Disability

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implementation of section 8(2) of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act.

Mr. Freeman: Officials have recently opened consultations with the local authority associations on the cost and other implications of the remaining sections of the Act, including section 8(2). Decisions on implementation will be made in the light of the outcome of these consultations and the availability of the necessary resources.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment services are available to local authorities to assist them in carrying out their duty under the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act to assess the needs of deaf-blind people.

Mr. Freeman: Section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which was implemented on 1 April 1987, requires local

authorities to assess the needs of a disabled person for services under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, if asked to do so by a disabled person or their carer. The Government White Paper "Caring for People" contains provision for the publication in late 1990 of a detailed code of guidance for local authorities which will offer advice on the working of the new assessment system. The code of guidance will be developed following discussions with professional and representative bodies.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring has been carried out by his Department into the implementation by local authorities of sections 4, 8, and 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's social services inspectorate has carried out a number of exercises to monitor the implementation of the Act. The results of an inspection of the operation of all sections of the Act in force, including sections 4, 8 and 9, were published on 6 February under the title "Developing Services for Disabled People", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specialist resources are available for the rehabilitation, care and training of deaf-blind people.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. Local authority social services departments allocate resources for the rehabilitation, care and training of deaf-blind people on the basis of their own, local assessment of need. A number of voluntary organisations also provide excellent services for deaf-blind people. Over the last three financial years, the Department has provided funding of £960,000 to voluntary organisations concerned with the needs of deaf-blind people.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to encourage local authorities to respond to the report, "Breaking Through —Developing Services for Deaf-Blind People".

Mr. Freeman: In October 1989, the Department and the deaf-blind services liaison group jointly funded and co-hosted with the Association of Directors of Social Services a national seminar to promote the recommendations in the report "Breaking Through". The seminar, which was aimed at senior managers of social services departments, was well attended and a report of the discussions will shortly be published and distributed to local authorities.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, in the light of the Beverley Lewis case, he has any proposals relating to the training given to professionals on assessing and meeting the needs of deaf-blind people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The death of Beverley Lewis is a very tragic case. We have received reports from the health and social services authorities concerned. When we have received the report from the coroner, we shall consider what, if any, action the Department should take in relation to the needs of deaf-blind people who are also mentally handicapped.

Community Care

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the implications of the Beverley Lewis case for community care services, with particular regard to monitoring the quality of care provided and the setting of national guidelines on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are awaiting the coroner's report on the Beverley Lewis case. Any implications for community care services will be fully considered when it is published.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of the National Health Service trust non-executive helpers provided by regional health authority chairmen.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the figures by year and in total for the number of hospital posts notified to his Department in which the job description included a duty to advise, undertake or participate in abortions from 31 December 1983 to the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the total number of such posts vacant in each year and in total for *(a)* psychiatry, *(b)* anaesthetics and *(c)* obstetrics and gynaecology.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 20 February 1990, column 719]:* I regret the answer given was incorrect.

The number of hospital posts notified to the Department of Health in which the job description included a duty to advise, undertake or participate in abortions from 31 December 1983 to the latest date for which figures are available are given in the table. These figures refer only to consultant posts, as information on other hospital grades is not held centrally. Also, the data requested on vacant posts are not held centrally.

Year	*Total*	*Psychiatry*	*Anaesthetics*	*Obstetrics and gynaecology*
1984	11	0	2	9
1985	2	0	2	0
1986	1	0	0	1
1987	2	0	1	1
1988	3	0	1	2
1989	5	0	0	5

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banks (Bad Debts)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of revenue to be lost in respect of write-offs for bad debts incurred in 1990-91 by the main banks in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: The revenue cost of write-offs of bad debts incurred in 1990-91 by the main banks in the United Kingdom has not been estimated.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to collect information on the total tax write-off for bank lending to the Third world.

Mr. Lilley: Banks' published accounts contain information about the commercial provisions they make. Information about the amounts allowable for tax can be obtained only after the banks have submitted their accounts to the Inland Revenue and the tax allowable provisions have been discussed and agreed between the taxpayer and the Revenue. This can be a lengthy process. The Inland Revenue collects information on amounts eventually allowed for tax.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to issue guidance to banks regarding future Government tax subsidies or write-offs to banks which fail to recoup loans to the Third world or other debtor nations.

Mr. Lilley: The amount of tax relief available to banks in respect of bad or doubtful debts, including debts owed by sovereign debtors, is determined by the tax laws enacted by Parliament.

Taxation

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross earnings the couple with an earner on average earnings, with two children, paid in tax, treating child benefit as negative income tax, in 1978-79 and in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: Figures for 1978-79 have been placed in the Library of the House, as noted in *Official Report*, 13 April 1989, column *624*, and estimates for 1989-90 were given in reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 8 January 1990, *Official Report*, column *559*.

Bank of England

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer meets the Governor from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Privatisation Revenue

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates privatisation revenue will be in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) on 15 February, column *381-82*.

Consumer Spending

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his reply of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *524*, concerning consumers' expenditure on rent, rates and water charges, if he will publish an estimate for 1989 and a forecast for 1990 together with *(a)* a table showing the current price figures for each year deflated by the increase in the retail prices index and *(b)* a table listing and quantifying the factors accounting for the changes in volume between 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates for 1989 will not be available until the latter part of March following the publication on 16 March of the CSO press notice on gross domestic product for the fourth quarter of 1989. Forecasts for 1990 are not available. With regard to *(a)*, my earlier reply gave figures in constant prices; the use of the retail prices index for deflation is not appropriate here. With regard to *(b)*, a description of the method of compilation of these constant price estimates is given in pages 77-78 of "United Kingdom National Accounts: Sources and Methods", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, further to table 15.1 of the Annual Abstract of Statistics 1989, showing for the latest available year the number of households in each country corresponding to the 13 listed categories together with the numbers of adults and children in each category in each country; and if he will provide a further breakdown of the other category.

Mr. Lilley: Information on the actual number of households for each category in each country is not available: in 1986 there were some 21·5 million households in the United Kingdom. However, an approximate guide to the relative numbers of households can be obtained from the family expenditure survey. This is given in the table for 1986, the latest available year. A further breakdown of the "other" category could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Number of households, adults and children from the 1986 Family Expenditure Survey[1], by household type and country

England

Household type	*Number of:* *H*[2]	*A*	*C*
1 adult—non-pensioner	914	914	0
1 adult—pensioner	532	532	0
2 adults—non-pensioner	1,683	3,366	0
2 adults—pensioner	286	572	0
2 adults, 1 child	462	924	462
2 adults, 2 children	611	1,222	1,222
2 adults, 3 children	199	398	597
3 adults	444	1,332	0
3 adults, 1 child	167	501	167
4 adults	174	696	0
1 adult with child(ren)	228	228	392
Other households	304	1,056	672
All households in sample	6,004	11,741	3,512

Wales

Household type	*Number of:* *H*	*A*	*C*
1 adult—non-pensioner	56	56	0
1 adult—pensioner	38	38	0
2 adults—non-pensioner	94	188	0
2 adults—pensioner	22	44	0
2 adults, 1 child	36	72	36
2 adults, 2 children	32	64	64
2 adults, 3 children	21	42	63
3 adults	31	93	0
3 adults, 1 child	15	45	15
4 adults	13	52	0
1 adult with child(ren)	10	10	17
Other households	21	72	47
All households in sample	389	776	242

Scotland

Household type	Number of: H	A	C
1 adult—non-pensioner	101	101	0
1 adult—pensioner	69	69	0
2 adults—non-pensioner	154	308	0
2 adults—pensioner	29	58	0
2 adults, 1 child	47	94	47
2 adults, 2 children	82	164	164
2 adults, 3 children	19	38	57
3 adults	49	147	0
3 adults, 1 child	19	57	19
4 adults	23	92	0
1 adult with child(ren)	26	26	40
Other households	34	119	77
All households in sample	652	1,273	404

Northern Ireland

Household type	Number of: H	A	C
1 adult—non-pensioner	18	18	0
1 adult—pensioner	14	14	0
2 adults—non-pensioner	32	64	0
2 adults—pensioner	1	2	0
2 adults, 1 child	10	20	10
2 adults, 2 children	19	38	38
2 adults, 3 children	7	14	21
3 adults	10	30	0
3 adults, 1 child	1	3	1
4 adults	2	8	0
1 adult with child(ren)	4	4	5
Other households	15	53	39
All households in sample	133	268	114

United Kingdom

Household type	Number of: H	A	C
1 adult—non-pensioner	1,089	1,089	0
1 adult—pensioner	653	653	0
2 adults—non-pensioner	1,963	3,926	0
2 adults—pensioner	338	676	0
2 adults, 1 child	555	1,110	555
2 adults, 2 children	744	1,488	1,488
2 adults, 3 children	246	492	738
3 adults	534	1,602	0
3 adults, 1 child	202	606	202
4 adults	212	848	0
1 adult with child(ren)	268	268	454
Other households	374	1,300	835
All households in sample	7,178	14,058	4,272

[1] The response to the survey differs as between regions and households and the results cannot be accurately grossed to give national figures.
[2] H = Households, A = Adults, C = Children.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table further to table 15.3 of the Annual Abstract of Statistics 1989, showing for each year and a forecast for 1987, 1988 and 1989 the amount and percentage share of imputed income from owner rent-free occupancy together with (i) the weekly equivalent of the rateable value, (ii) the percentage uplift for the general increase in rents, (iii) the corresponding increase in council rents and (iv) the rate and rent factors included in the retail prices index.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is given in the table. Figures for 1989 are not available for all items.

United Kingdom

Year	Imputed income[1] from owner/rent free occupancy: £/week average per household	Percentage of average household income[2]	Weekly [1,3] equivalent of rateable value £/household	Rents price[4] index 1985 = 100	Index of local[5] authorities rents 1985 = 100	Components of the retail prices index annual averages: Rent 1985 = 100	Rates 1985 = 100
1975	2·44	3·4	3·19	32·0	26·6	27·3	26·9
1976	3·46	4·2	3·20	37·1	30·6	31·4	31·0
1977	3·93	4·2	3·32	41·2	35·4	35·9	34·5
1978	4·93	4·6	3·54	46·3	37·7	39·7	38·1
1979	5·65	4·7	3·62	53·7	41·3	43·6	44·2
1980	6·75	4·6	3·68	62·6	49·7	52·0	55·4
1981	7·79	4·6	3·70	74·8	72·7	70·5	70·1
1982	8·57	4·8	3·64	84·5	85·7	82·7	80·3
1983	9·70	5·2	3·71	90·8	89·3	88·0	87·1
1984	10·23	5·2	3·74	94·3	93·9	93·2	92·4
1985	11·86	5·5	4·30	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
1986	12·57	5·4	4·45	105·1	106·1	106·5	113·0
1987	12·95	5·1	4·48	110·3	112·4	112·8	123·2
1988	15·83	5·6	4·60	116·9	123·4	121·1	133·4
1989	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	136·6	132·2	145·8

[1] Estimates based on Family Expenditure Survey.
[2] Household income figures for 1982 and earlier are not comparable with 1983, or with 1984, or with 1985 and following years.
[3] In 1985 rateable values for Scotland were reassessed.
[4] Consumers Expenditure rent deflator.
[5] Estimates for local authorities Great Britain only based on returns by local authorities to the Department of the Environment, Scottish Development Department and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing, for each region, total investment by companies in research and development.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that the information is not available.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the expenditure of central Government for each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms for the latest year for which figures are available; what was the percentage increase in each year; and what was the percentage increase between 1979 and the latest available year;

(2) what was the expenditure of central Government for each year since 1979 per head of population in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant price terms, based on the latest year for which figures are available; what was the percentage increase in each year; and what was the percentage increase between 1979 and the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 6 March 1990]*: The information requested on central Government's expenditure is given in the table:

Central Government's own expenditure, 1978-79 to 1988-89

	1978-79 outturn	*1979-80 outturn*	*1980-81 outturn*	*1981-82 outturn*	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*
Cash terms:											
Total expenditure £ billion	44·9	52·7	64·1	73·8	82·4	86·2	93·2	99·6	106·1	111·2	116·3
Percentage increase on previous year	—	17·4	21·7	15·1	11·7	4·5	8·2	6·8	6·6	4·8	4·6
Total expenditure per head[1] £	799	937	1,139	1,310	1,464	1,529	1,651	1,759	1,869	1,953	2,038
Percentage increase on previous year	—	17·3	21·5	15·0	11·8	4·4	8·0	6·5	6·3	4·5	4·4
Real terms (adjusted to 1988-89 prices for effect of general inflation by the GDP deflator):											
Total expenditure £ billion	98·7	99·2	102·0	106·9	111·4	111·2	114·6	116·2	119·8	119·2	116·3
Percentage increase on previous year	—	0·5	2·9	4·8	4·2	−0·1	3·1	1·4	3·1	−0·5	−2·5
Total expenditure per head[1] £	1,757	1,764	1,812	1,898	1,979	1,974	2,031	2,053	2,111	2,094	2,038
Percentage increase on previous year	—	0·4	2·7	4·8	4·3	−0·2	2·8	1·1	2·8	−0·8	−2·7

[1]Per head figures are based on mid-year population estimates.

Between 1978-79 and 1988-89, central Government's expenditure increased by 159 per cent. in cash terms and by 18 per cent. in real terms. The increase per head of population over the same period is 155 per cent. in cash terms and 16 per cent. in real terms.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Milk Quota

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for the distribution in Northern Ireland of the 1 per cent. of additional milk quota which has been allocated to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 15 February that he had submitted to the European Commission for approval the Government's proposals for the allocation of the extra 1 per cent. quota in the United Kingdom.

The proposals include allocation

to new entrants
to producers whose quota is less than 200,000 litres
to producers in certain remote areas
to producers whose Tribunal awards had not been granted in full because insufficient quota was available

Producers in Northern Ireland will benefit under each of the categories with the exception of the remote areas provision which applies only to the Scilly Isles and Scottish islands.

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many administrative staff employed by the Eastern health and social services board are on a salary scale which at the minimum point is in excess of £30,000 per annum; and what is the designated name of each such grade.

Mr. Needham: There are 12 administrative staff employed by the Eastern health and social services board who are on a salary scale which at the minimum point is in excess of £30,000 per annum. The designated name of each grade is as follows:

Board General Manager
Director of Finance
Director of Operations
Director of Personnel and Management Services
Director of Planning
Unit General Manager 1 (4 posts)
Unit General Manager 2 (3 posts)

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set out in the *Official Report* the qualifications and experience required from applicants for posts of manager of units of management in the Eastern health and social services board.

Mr. Needham: There are nine unit general manager posts in the Eastern health and social services board and applicants for all these posts were required to have:

(1.) A good academic or professional qualification to degree level and have had recent senior management experience in the public or private sector; or recent senior management experience of at least five years in the public or private sector.
(2.) A proven record of managerial achievement in their current and previous posts and be able to demonstrate leadership skills in a multi-professional environment.
(3.) The ability to set and work to agreed objectives.
(4.) The ability to communicate effectively through all levels of the organisation and with the external environment.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of the annual

expenditure incurred by the Eastern health and social services board is accounted for by the salaries of staff being paid in excess of £20,000 per annum who are in administrative grades.

Mr. Needham: The information is not readily available in the form requested. However, the total salaries and wages element of the Eastern board's gross revenue expenditure in 1988-89 was approximately 75 per cent. and the administrative and clerical staffs salaries and wages accounted for about 7 per cent. The proportion relating to those paid in excess of £20,000 would therefore be very small.

Litter

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prosecutions there have been under the anti-litter legislation in each district council area since the legislation came into operation; what is the number that have been successful; and what was the range of fines imposed by the courts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under article 28 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 it is an offence with a maximum penalty of a £400 fine for anyone, without lawful authority, to throw, dump or deposit litter in any place in the open air.

The information requested is not held centrally and is being sought from individual councils. I will write as soon as possible and will place copies of my letter in the Library.

Emigration

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest estimate of figures for emigration from Northern Ireland to *(a)* other parts of the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Republic of Eire and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

(a) 16,100
(b) 1,600
(c) 3,100

Figures are derived from the 1989 mid-year estimates of population and cover the period 1 July 1988 to 30 June 1989.

Family Benefits

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many families in Northern Ireland were in receipt of child benefit in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: The information requested, as at 31 January, is as follows:

31 January 1988	215,476
31 January 1989	215,858
31 January 1990	215,750

Radiation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, following the publication of the Gardner report on radiation risks, he will review current radiation exposure limits at facilities licensed to handle radioactive materials in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The legislation which specifies the maximum permissible occupational dose of ionising radiation is currently under review in Great Britain. Should this review result in changes in the statutory limits applicable in Great Britain, similar changes will be made in the corresponding Northern Ireland legislation to ensure that identical legislative control exists throughout the United Kingdom.

Coleraine Hospital

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 19 February, *Official Report*, column 569, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Northern health and social services board is aware of the standards required by the Government for the option appraisal; and if he will outline the options being considered in the option appraisal.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The standards required by the Government for option appraisal are set out in the HM Treasury publication "Investment Appraisal in the Public Sector" and the Department of Health publication "Investment Appraisal —A Guide for the National Health Service". Both documents have been issued to health and social services boards. The identification of options is part of the appraisal process and these should include all feasible ways of providing the required level and quality of services to patients.

Fair Employment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 21 February, whether a code of practice, acceptable to the Fair Employment Commission, exists for disclosure of information as to the religious composition of the work force in each different premises of a private firm similar to that agreed for the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* I am informed by the Fair Employment Commission that it is not aware of any private sector firm which has drawn up guidelines on the disclosure of monitoring information. However, this issue is dealt with in "Fair Employment in Northern Ireland Code of Practice", published by the Department of Economic Development and circulated to all employers in Northern Ireland in December 1989.

Western Health and Social Services Board

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employees the Western health and social services board has; and how many were educated at a primary school in *(a)* Northern Ireland, *(b)* the Irish Republic and *(c)* Great Britain.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* On 3 January 1990, the Western health and social services board employed 6,809 staff (excluding homehelps), of whom 5,174 were educated at primary schools in Northern Ireland and 885 were educated at primary schools outside Northern Ireland. No record of primary school attended is held in respect of the remaining 750 staff.

The latest available figure for homehelps relates to 18 October 1989. Of the 1,866 employed on that date, 989 were educated at primary schools in Northern Ireland and

110 were educated at primary schools outside Northern Ireland. No record of primary school attended is held in respect of the remaining 767 homehelps.

Of those educated outside Northern Ireland it is not possible to disaggregate those who attended school in Great Britain and those who attended school in the Republic of Ireland.

Fisheries Research

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) on how many *(a)* occasions and *(b)* total days, at what cost and leasing income per day, and to whom the vessel Lough Foyle has been leased since it came into the possession of the Northern Ireland authorities;

(2) whether the leasing of the vessel Lough Foyle has shown a profit or loss.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The objective of leasing the Lough Foyle is to offset the costs associated with ownership and crewing during periods when it is not required for research by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

The MV Lough Foyle has been chartered on nine occasions involving 93 days since the vessel came into the possession of the Northern Ireland authorities. Lessees have been the Scottish Marine Biological Association, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Department of the Marine, Republic of Ireland.

The average daily full economic cost of operating the vessel while at sea to the Department is currently £1,500.

The total leasing income to date has been £93,826·15.

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what consultations were made with local social security offices in determining the 1990-91 social fund allocation; and what weight was given to factors such as their premium case loads and the operation of their existing budgets;

(2) what information is available to indicate the allocation of the social fund budget to each social security office for 1990-91, indicating the balance between loans and grants, the total income support case load of each and the figures for their respective premium case loads;

(3) what reference was made to relevant health and social services agencies regarding their projections for community care in determining social fund allocations for 1990-91.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* The allocations to social security offices for 1990-91 have not yet been determined. They will be announced in due course and a paper containing details of the basis of the allocations will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate for each social security office the totals allocated for loans in the 1988-89 social fund budget, the total amount paid out, the number of loans given, the numbers refused, and the total amount repaid and the number of recipients who had totally repaid their loans by *(a)* March 31 1989, *(b)* June 30 1989, *(c)* September 30 1989 and *(d)* December 31 1989.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* The number of recipients who have totally repaid their loans is not available, but the total amounts repaid are shown in the table. The remaining information is held in the Library.

Social Fund Loans: Details of Amounts Repaid

Social Security Office	*Period up to 31 March 1989*	*Period up to 30 June 1989*	*Period up to 30 September 1989*	*Period up to 31 December 1989*
Andersonstown	310,217·18	459,780·84	619,360·43	777,718·03
Antrim	138,151·64	208,698·21	283,135·11	367,895·85
Armagh	90,170·00	142,147·66	199,858·96	260,749·62
Ballymena	130,697·32	190,399·54	253,730·61	316,671·94
Ballymoney	83,855·55	126,920·25	174,031·91	222,689·66
Ballynahinch	12,142·99	19,688·78	28,732·49	37,305·14
Banbridge	48,621·24	75,220·08	103,324·33	133,504·76
Bangor	62,632·25	97,309·14	133,466·91	169,468·41
Carrickfergus	66,741·15	100,130·57	133,313·75	167,055·30
Coleraine	138,359·05	203,330·74	271,468·91	342,255·78
Cookstown	87,151·99	133,957·42	181,453·82	231,206·61
Corporation Street	293,354·23	473,023·91	666,515·15	871,057·57
Downpatrick	64,412·81	91,743·89	119,061·09	151,830·46
Dungannon	128,599·41	200,102·84	274,385·24	351,787·76
Enniskillen	98,319·58	155,491·13	214,853·62	278,642·47
Falls	284,793·85	417,867·39	559,122·30	712,196·60
Holywood Road	167,158·84	250,541·13	343,994·49	448,407·92
Kilkeel	15,155·75	24,528·68	34,421·69	44,719·40
Knockbreda	103,472·26	150,266·12	196,938·62	247,286·23
Larne	68,863·40	99,895·56	134,230·39	168,584·00
Limavady	68,474·52	93,506·13	122,835·69	154,127·58
Lisburn	210,938·49	299,729·25	398,619·68	498,756·31
Londonderry	357,795·15	589,318·67	836,453·59	1,091,846·02
Lurgan	160,122·26	247,788·58	339,370·42	434,782·91
Magherafelt	81,438·76	128,549·05	182,222·52	241,751·18
Newcastle	26,139·12	40,671·16	53,595·63	69,301·79
Newry	147,094·52	244,663·95	352,667·25	470,703·56
Newtownabbey	113,804·24	167,412·06	224,037·36	284,787·86
Newtownards	66,456·06	95,867·33	125,789·55	157,905·27
Omagh	136,444·36	202,436·16	273,853·07	354,034·82
Portadown	81,972·64	120,370·70	161,601·65	206,677·56

Social Security Office	Period up to 31 March 1989	Period up to 30 June 1989	Period up to 30 September 1989	Period up to 31 December 1989
Shaftesbury Square	166,087·30	252,539·26	348,355·22	451,992·73
Shankill	140,989·13	199,196·13	259,145·53	320,247·44
Strabane	148,694·34	224,681·56	301,303·20	374,734·59
Total	4,295,321·38	6,527,763·87	8,905,150·18	11,412,683·13

[1] The amounts for each period are cumulative.

One-Parent Benefit

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men are in receipt of one-parent benefit.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The figures are 21,620 women and 2,096 men.

TRANSPORT

Railway Investment

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* investment in British Rail for each of the financial years 1983 to date showing what sums for capital investment have been derived from Exchequer and BR sources, respectively, together with indications of the parts of such capital liable and not liable to interest charge, respectively, in any one year.

Mr. Portillo: Table 7.33 in chapter 7 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990/91 to 1992/93" (Cm 1007) sets out British Rail's capital requirements and the internal and external resources from which these requirements are met. "External finance" comprises revenue subsidy paid by the Government and borrowing, principally from the national loans fund. We do not apportion particular forms of finance between investment and other expenditure. BR "rail" investment since 1983 is as follows, in £m and at constant 1989-90 prices:

Year	Rail investment
1983	348
1984	[1]369
1985-86	498
1986-87	482
1987-88	604
1988-89	610
1989-90	[2]670

Note:
(1) 1984-85 was a 15-month financial period. The figure shown for 1984 is the 12-month equivalent.
(2) Estimate.

Railways Safety Inspectorate

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the transfer of the railways safety inspectorate to the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 27 February, *Hansard* col. *143*.

Feasibility Studies (East Sussex)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those feasibility studies or other paperwork exercises carried out for his Department by East Sussex county council since 1985, giving the year, the nature of the study and details of any moneys paid in respect of these studies.

Mr. Atkins: Since 1985 East Sussex county council, as agent authority, has advised and assisted the Department on a wide range of issues relating to the maintenance and improvement of and development control affecting the trunk roads in the county. The number of items dealt with over this range is large. A detailed breakdown is not readily available and would be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The only major feasibility study carried out in this period is that for improving the A27 between the eastern end of the Lewes bypass and Polegate.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) in respect of the recent feasibility study into the A27 Lewes-Polegate road, conducted by East Sussex county council for his Department, on what date *(a)* the Department communicated to the county council its intention to commission a feasibility study, *(b)* the county council confirmed it wished to conduct the study, *(c)* the study was commissioned by his Department and *(d)* the completed study was received from the county council by his Department;

(2) in respect of the recent feasibility study into the A27 Lewes-Polegate road conducted by East Sussex county council for his Department *(a)* what sum was paid to the county council for the work carried out and *(b)* if any other moneys were paid out for this study.

Mr. Atkins: The need for an A27 Lewes to Polegate scheme identification study was first announced in the 1987 roads White Paper published in April 1987. East Sussex county council offered to assist in February 1988, was commissioned to carry out the study in August 1988, forwarded its confidential report to the Department in October 1988 and was paid £17,567 (exclusive of VAT).

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he or his officials last met representatives from East Sussex county council; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Officials met representatives of East Sussex county council on 1 March when the Department's consultants, appointed to investigate options for improving the A27 between Lewes and Polegate, were introduced to county officers and lines of communication established for on-going liaison during the scheme's preparation.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will convene a national conference of all interested parties to discuss the future of the Channel tunnel and rail link throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: No. British Rail undertook an extensive programme of consultation in all regions before publishing in December last year its plan for international passenger and freight services when the Channel tunnel opens. In accordance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 the board will be keeping this plan under review. Interested groups should therefore make their points to British Rail.

Midland Line (Electrification)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from elected bodies in the east midlands regarding the need to provide funding for the electrification of the midland line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have received a number of representations from local authorities about the electrification of the midland main line, including one from the midland main line consortium of local authorities. It remains for British Rail to come forward with any proposals it considers worth while.

"The Road User and the Law"

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to bring forward legislation to implement the proposals in "The Road User and the Law".

Mr. Atkins: As soon as time is available.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the managerial competence of the docklands light railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The management of the docklands light railway is a matter for the chairman and board of London Regional Transport. The performance of the railway's operations is a regular topic of discussion between the chairman of London Regional Transport, the chairman of the docklands light railway and me.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Atkins: My Department employs 26 internal auditors at an annual cost of around £580,000. In 1989, 73 internal audit reports were produced, none of which needed to be drawn to Ministers' attention. No internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms.

Radioactive Waste

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has on the number of competing designs for a transportation flask for vitrified high-level radioactive waste; and if he will list the companies involved;

(2) what method of review and assessment he anticipates for the design safety report accompanying British Nuclear Fuels plc's formal licence submission for a transportation flask for the return of vitrified high-level radioactive waste to its country of origin;

(3) when he expects to receive a formal licence submission from British Nuclear Fuels plc's for a transportation flask for the return of vitrified high-level radioactive waste to its country of origin;

(4) whether he will place in the Library a copy of British Nuclear Fuels plc's design safety report of a transportation flask for vitrified high-level radioactive waste.

Mr. Atkins: No application has been received from BNFL plc or any other company for certification of a flask for the transport of vitrified high-level radioactive waste.

Details of the designs involved, were such an application to be received, would be the property of the applicant and subject to commercial confidentiality.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on transportation flasks for vitrified high-level radioactive waste *(a)* under development and *(b)* in service anywhere in the world; and if he will list the countries.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Roundabouts

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many roundabouts have been reduced in diameter each year for the last 10 years; and why.

Mr. Atkins: Numerical information of the kind requested is not collected. Reductions in the diameter of roundabouts are mainly made to improve efficiency and-or capacity.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was, for the five most recent years available, the number of road accidents which occurred at roundabouts; and whether the figures represent a growing or diminishing percentage of total road vehicle accidents.

Mr. Atkins: The Department collects information only on road accidents involving personal injury. The information requested for personal injury road accidents is as follows:

Personal injury road accidents at roundabouts: 1984 to 1988

	Accidents at roundabouts	*All accidents*	*Per cent. of accidents at roundabouts*
1984			
Fatal	70	5,138	1·36
Serious	1,884	62,048	3·04
All severities	11,592	253,183	4·58
1985			
Fatal	64	4,768	1·34
Serious	1,884	60,286	3·13

	Accidents at roundabouts	All accidents	Per cent. of accidents at roundabouts
All severities	11,723	245,645	4·77
1986			
Fatal	82	4,895	1·68
Serious	1,862	58,187	3·20
All severities	12,028	247,854	4·85
1987			
Fatal	66	4,694	1·41
Serious	1,719	54,352	3·16
All severities	11,831	239,063	4·95
1988			
Fatal	68	4,643	1·46
Serious	1,775	53,850	3·30
All severities	13,037	246,994	5·28

The figures show that there has been a slight increase in the percentage of road accidents occurring at roundabouts over the five-year period. The number of these accidents in which there were fatal or serious casualties has declined over the same period.

London Road Assessment Studies

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the total number of written comments received in response to *(a)* "Traffic in London", *(b)* the east London assessment study, *(c)* the south London assessment study, *(d)* the south circular assessment study and *(e)* the west London assessment study; and if he will respond to them;

(2) what is the total number of signatories on petitions received directly by him concerning "Traffic in London" and the four assessment studies in London;

(3) when he expects to make an announcement on the result of consultation on "Traffic in London" and the London assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: The thousands of responses on the London assessment studies and "Traffic in London" are currently being collated and analysed. To make interim counts would involve a disproportionate cost and would delay the decision process, thus prolonging the uncertainty for residents.

Motorway Service Stations

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway service stations he plans to open in the next five years.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's strategic programme for motorway service areas in England is designed to fill gaps in the existing network and provide facilities on new motorways. The programme comprises 19 sites, of which 13 are likely to open within five years, subject to completion of planning procedures and land acquisition.

Rolling Stock

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport over what time scale he has been asked to approve investment in the new Networker rolling stock to be introduced by British Rail on the north Kent line.

Mr. Portillo: Last August my right hon. Friend authorised the purchase of the first 400 class 465 Networkers at a cost of £257 million (at 1989 prices) and gave approval in principle for a further 276 vehicles. These will replace the existing rolling stock on routes to south-east London and north Kent. I expect to receive proposals for further orders of class 465s to cater for the continuing growth in demand on these routes.

Eastern District Distributor Road

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will extend the construction of the eastern district distributor road and the proposed A46-A47 link road to at least dual carriageway throughout;

(2) if, in the study that he is now making of traffic management around Leicester, he will proceed at the earliest date to make the eastern district distributor road dual carriageway standard throughout to relieve traffic congestion on the A6 at Oadby.

Mr. Atkins: The Leicester eastern district distributor road, the Leicester southern district distributor road and the A46-A47 link road are the responsibility of Leicestershire county council as highway authority, and it is for that authority to determine its standards and programming.

The proposed Leicester eastern bypass is a trunk road scheme. It is hoped to announce a preferred route in 1994. The carriageway standard has yet to be determined.

Beach Pollution (Sussex)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, regarding the MV Fathulkhair, *Official Report*, column *237*, what steps he is able to take to secure compensation from the vessel's owners for the cost incurred in dealing with the dangerous cargo from the vessel on British beaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 6 March 1990]:* I am looking into the question of whether the Government have a claim against the owners which would be enforceable as a matter of law, and if I am satisfied that there is a sustainable claim I shall initiate whatever proceedings are necessary.

EMPLOYMENT

Workplace Health and Safety

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve health protection and safety conditions in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have increased financial provision for the commission and executive over previously agreed levels again for 1990-91. The additional provision is £7 million excluding money transferred from the Department of Energy for nuclear safety research.

My right hon. and learned Friend expects shortly to receive for his approval details of the commission's plans for 1990-91 and beyond. The commission hopes to publish its plan of work in May.

Careers Service

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to publish the reports of inspections of the careers service begun after September 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Five inspections of careers services have been set up following the announcement of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) last year that reports on inspections carried out after September 1989 would be published. These inspections are all currently taking place and I would expect to publish the reports of these inspections in September or October of this year.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Health and Safety Executive's latest annual report.

Mr. Nicholls: The report of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive was published on 26 February. Latest provisional statistics for 1988-89 published in the report show an apparent levelling off of major injuries, which we very much welcome. But the number of fatalities, which include those from the Piper Alpha disaster, and high or increasing injury rates in particular industries demonstrate that there is not room for any relaxation of effort by industry to improve standards.

Construction Industry

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide statistics showing for each year between 1980 and 1989 the number of people working on Government-sponsored training programmes in the construction industry.

Mr. Nicholls: I regret the information is not available.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by tourist board area what information he has on the mean percentage increases that *(a)* hotel and *(b)* guest house owners are charging, following the introductions of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Public Sector Wage Bargaining (EC)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the system of public sector wage bargaining in each European Community country.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department does not hold comprehensive information on public sector wage bargaining systems in other EEC countries.

Social Charter

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what calculations his Department has made on job losses in the United Kingdom consequent upon the introduction of minimum wage legislation under the European social charter.

Mr. Nicholls: Officials in the Department have estimated that the imposition of a minimum wage set at 50 per cent. of the national average wage would result in the loss of about three quarters of a million jobs in this country.

Wages Inspectorate

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of investigations carried out by the wages inspectorate for the United Kingdom, the south-west region, Avon and the Bristol, South constituency for the latest three years and the numbers of establishments found to be in breach of wages council rates and the numbers of prosecutions for each area and year, respectively.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics are not kept for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions. The table gives the information requested for the south-west division and for Great Britain as a whole. Statistics for 1989 are not yet available.

Northern Ireland has a separate wages council system, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

	Great Britain			*South West Division*		
	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Number of establishments checked by all methods	35,777	31,524	32,474	2,319	4,073	3,586
Number of establishments found underpaying	8,205	4,443	5,597	832	961	1,156
Number of prosecutions for all wages council offences	3	8	11	—	—	2

Bramley Employment Office

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the planned closure of the Bramley employment office in Leeds, West.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service is working progressively to bring jobcentres and benefit offices together under one roof. This will provide a new and improved one-stop service.

I will ensure that the hon. Member is informed as soon as a decision about the future of the office at Bramley has been taken.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

(a) Number of auditors employed in the Department —124.

(b) Total cost of the auditors—£2,723,881.

(c) Number of audit reports produced in 1989—302.
(d) Number of audit reports drawn to attention of a Minister—3.
(e) The following internal audit work was subcontracted to private firms—Nil.
(f) The total cost of subcontracting works to private firms—Nil.

Paisley Job Club

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many investigations have been made by his officials into the activities of the Paisley job club; and what were the results.

Mr. Eggar: Employment service officials visit Paisley job club at six-monthly intervals as part of the standard monitoring procedure. The last such visit took place on 9 January 1990. In addition, a further meeting took place on 22 February 1990 between employment service officials and the company which is contracted to run the job club on its behalf. This meeting followed allegations made by a journalist working for the *Glasgow Evening Times*.

The employment service believes that the Paisley job club is, in general, being run in accordance with its requirements. It is accepted that some irregularities in record-keeping have occurred, but these have had no effect on unemployment statistics and have not resulted in any additional payments being made to the contractor. The job club records are being amended to correct the errors which have been found. I believe that the Paisley job club, like the programmes generally, provides valuable help to long-term unemployed people, and others at a disadvantage in the labour market, in their search for work.

MTC Limited

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding forged JC18 forms processed by his Department and MTC Limited of Ingram street, Glasgow; and if he will make a statement on what further steps he intends to take to investigate the allegations and admissions of forged documents.

Mr. Eggar: Form JC18 is a record of membership of, and outcomes from, job clubs. Allegations that 12 forms had been forged at Paisley job club were made by a Glasgow journalist. Investigations are continuing, but it has been established that incorrect information had been entered on job club records by a member who was acting without the authority of MTC Limited or the employment service and who has now left the job club.

Further checks are being made to ensure there are no other errors. The need for further action to ensure accurate record-keeping at the job club will be considered when the results of these checks are known.

The allegations are confined to the Paisley job club.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the contractual relationship between MTC Limited and the Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar: MTC Limited has 19 contracts with the Department of Employment in respect of programmes managed by the employment service. Thirteen of these are to operate job clubs and six are for the provision of restart courses.

There are further contracts between MTC Limited and the Department of Employment in respect of programmes managed by the Training Agency. These relate to employment training and YTS.

Restart

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the outcomes of restart interviews conducted three months prior to and three months after the introduction of the Social Security Act 1989, or the nearest other appropriate dates.

Mr. Eggar: Monthly figures are not available. The only figures available are for the quarters ending September 1989 and December 1989.

In the quarter ending September 1989, 505,600 restart interviews were conducted. Of these 85 per cent. resulted in an offer of help being made and 71 per cent. of interviews resulted in the offer being accepted.

In the quarter ending December 1989, 464,100 restart interviews were conducted. Of these, 82 per cent. resulted in an offer of help being made and 71 per cent. of interviews resulted in the offer being accepted.

Cumbria TEC

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next intends to meet representatives of the Cumbria training and enterprise council.

Mr. Eggar: I last met Mr. Rick Emslie, the chairman of Cumbria training and enterprise council on Tuesday 27 February.

Wages (Regional Variations)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring his Department undertakes on regional variations in pay level for jobs on offer at jobcentres in England.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Employment does not monitor regional pay variations for jobs on offer at jobcentres.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement about the sale of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar: Further to the statement that my right hon. and learned Friend made to the House on 13 February 1990 (*Official Report*, 13 February 1990, column 141) about the sale of the Skills Training Agency (STA), I can announce that terms of sale have now been agreed with a consortium headed by Mr. Christopher Lakin for the training businesses located at Cumbria (Maryport), East Lancs (Accrington), Ipswich and St. Helens skillcentres.

The offer from Mr. Lakin's consortium was considered against the Government's objectives for the sale, which were placed in the Vote Office on 13 February, and will involve a payment of some £2 million from the Government to the consortium: this reflects the need for restructuring and reforming the training businesses. There will be no loss to the Government from the transaction compared with the alternative of closing these skillcentres. The total number of skillcentres which will be sold is now 51.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on benefit paid to employment training trainees in December 1989 for Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* Trainees on employment training do not receive benefit but a training allowance based on previous benefit entitlement plus an additional amount of £10 a week.

HSE Medical Advisory Service

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of staff employed by the Health and Safety Executive employment medical advisory service for the latest date for which figures are available and for every year since 1979; and if he will provide a breakdown by occupation and location.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 March 1990]:* The total numbers from 1979 to 1989 (at 1 June) by occupational group were:

Year	*Doctors*	*Nurses*	*Others*[1]	*Total*
1979	78·5	87·5	87·5	253·5
1980	69	73	80·5	222·5
1981	71·5	66·5	73·5	211·5
1982	64	57·5	66	187·5
1983	65	58·5	61	184·5
1984	63	50·5	60	173·5
1985	61·5	42·5	61·5	165·5
1986	57·5	43	59·5	160
1987	56·5	45	50	151·5
1988	45	47	41	133
1989	43·5	46·5	39·5	129·5

[1] eg administrative and support.

An analysis of staff employed at 1 February 1990 by broad occupational group and area is given in the table:

EMAS staff at 1 February 1990
by occupational group and location

Areas	*Doctors*	*Nurses*	*Others*[1]	*Total*
South West	4·0	4·0	3·0	11·0
South	2·0	2·0	1·5	5·5
South East	1·0	2·0	1·5	4·5
London North	1·0	2·0	2·5	5·5
London South	2·0	1·0	1·5	4·5
East Anglia	1·5	1·5	2·0	5·0
Northern Home Counties	2·0	1·0	2·0	5·0
East Midlands	2·5	2·0	1·5	6·0
West Midlands	3·0	3·0	2·0	8·0
Wales	3·0	4·0	2·0	9·0
Marches	2·0	2·0	2·0	6·0
North Midlands	1·5	2·0	1·0	4·5
South Yorkshire and Humberside	1·0	3·0	1·5	5·5
West and North Yorkshire	2·5	1·0	2·0	5·5
Greater Manchester	1·5	2·0	2·5	6·0
Merseyside	1·5	2·0	1·5	5·0
North West	2·0	2·0	3·0	7·0
North East	4·0	5·0	4·0	13·0
Scotland East	3·5	4·0	3·0	10·5
Scotland West	2·5	4·0	1·5	8·0
Totals	44·0	49·5	41·5	135·0

[1] eg administrative and support staff.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *384*, to the hon. Member for Stretford he will itemise the provisional total of 327 accidents between March 1987 and December 1989, during work on the Channel tunnel, according to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations; and give the nature of the injury.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 March 1990]:* The information as requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The table gives a breakdown of the nature of accidents which occurred at the tunnelling sites and were reported to the Health and Safety Executive between March 1987 and December 1989 in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations:

Nature of Accident	*Total Number of Accidents Reported*[1]
Contact with moving machinery	15
Struck by object	91
Struck by vehicle	17
Struck against something	11
Handling/Lifting/Carrying	60
Slip/trip/fall on same level	73

Nature of Accident	Total Number of Accidents Reported[1]
Fall from height	40
Collapse or overturning	5
Exposure to harmful substance	9
Contact with electricity or electrical discharge	4
Other	2

[1] Provisional

Tourism (South Africa)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 23 February 1990, c. 956]:* My earlier answer to this question contained an error, in that it implied that the Foreign Ministers of the European Community were a party to the ban on the promotion of tourism. Paragraph two of the reply should have read:

"In 1986 European Community Foreign Ministers and, separately, Heads of Government participating at the Commonwealth review meeting agreed to impose a number of measures against South Africa. In the case of the Commonwealth Heads, these included a ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment announced the implementation in the United Kingdom of this ban in a written answer to a parliamentary question on 30 October 1986 (*Official Report*, column *213*). In our case the measure was voluntary."

WALES

Gwent Health Authority

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made on the investigation into alleged misappropriation of funds regarding the Look After Yourself project sponsored by Gwent health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I will write to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Water Pollution

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether, from 1 January 1988 to date, the drinking water of any Welsh constituency has failed to meet EC standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The EC standards on drinking water quality have been incorporated into national legislation by the Water Act 1989 and the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989.

Under this legislation water undertakers may approach the Secretary of State who appointed them for a relaxation of the standards where this is because of the nature and structure of the ground from which the supply emanates, exceptional meteorological conditions, or in order to maintain a public supply in an emergency. The Secretary of State may also accept undertakings given by water undertakers to carry out remedial work within a specified time scale to bring their supplies up to standard. As a result of these procedures, which have been endorsed by the EC, the Secretary of State has been made aware of supplies including a number in Wales which do not currently meet EC standards.

The undertakers are now required to maintain public registers which include particulars of relaxations, undertakings and the results of sample analysis. In accordance with the regulations, the information is prepared on a water supply zone basis, rather than by constituency.

Local authorities have a duty to monitor the quality of water supplies for domestic purposes in their areas. Water undertakers must provide local authorities with information on the extent to which the undertaker has complied with its obligations to supply wholesome water and, where appropriate, the remedial action taken. Should a local authority believe that the public supply is, or is likely to become, unwholesome and is not satisfied that appropriate remedial action has been taken, the authority is under a duty to notify my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who if the water is supplied by an undertaker appointed by him, must in most circumstances take enforcement action against the undertaker.

The local authority's duty to monitor water supplied for domestic purposes extends to private supplies and if these supplies are unwholesome, authorities may serve a notice requiring the improvement of the supply or connection to a public supply. These notices may be served without notifying the Secretary of State unless representations or objections are received.

M4, Earlswood-Lôn Las

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a detailed analysis of the criteria used to judge tenders for the contract to construct the first stage of the M4 missing link between Earlswood and Lôn Las.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Tenders were assessed against the criteria specified in the documents issued to tendering firms and the award of contract was made on the basis of the lowest acceptable offer.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the unsuccessful tenderers for the construction of the first stage of the M4 missing link between Earlswood and Lôn Las.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is not the practice to publish this information.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the recent publication "The Structural Funds of the European Communities", produced by the London chamber of commerce.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. Publications already held in my Department's library, including the *Official Journal of the European Communities*, provide sufficient material on the European structural funds for reference purposes.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost, how many internal audit

reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Peter Walker: During 1989, 17 staff were employed at a cost of £299,000, and 43 reports were issued. All reports are submitted to senior management who may draw Ministers' attention to specific matters as appropriate.

Subcontracted work includes internal audit services for NDPBs and advice and support on the development of computer audit. The total value of these contracts is £194,000.

Farming

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers, partners, directors and farm workers were employed in each county in Wales in *(a)* June and *(b)* December 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: Figures from the agricultural census for June 1989 are shown in the following table. County figures cannot be produced from the December agricultural sample surveys.

Number of farmers and workers employed in agriculture June 1989
County by standard statistical region

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Wales
Whole-time principal farmers	2,512	7,309	1,338	2,965	561	3,894	316	497	19,392
Whole-time other partners	620	1,553	278	574	130	1,046	91	110	4,402
Whole-time total	3,132	8,862	1,616	3,539	691	4,940	407	607	23,794
Part-time principal farmers	999	2,509	597	1,184	291	991	120	282	6,901
Part-time other partners	417	946	245	401	106	570	60	102	2,847
Part-time total	1,416	3,455	842	1,505	397	1,561	188	384	9,828
Total Farmers and Directors	4,548	12,317	2,458	5,124	1,088	6,501	595	991	33,622
All workers (excluding salaried managers) male	2,255	4,805	1,122	2,003	520	2,996	424	463	14,588
All workers (excluding salaried managers) female	452	1,385	317	308	96	476	119	129	3,282
All workers (excluding salaried managers) total	2,707	6,190	1,439	2,311	616	3,472	543	592	17,870
Salaried managers	56	63	33	40	11	42	16	9	278

Source: June census 1989.
Note: Figures exclude minor holdings not included in June census.

Hospital Construction

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the approximate average lead-in time, from formal submission of planning application to commissioning, of district general hospitals constructed in Wales since 1975.

Mr. Grist: This information is not readily available for all district general hospitals completed in Wales since 1975 but the average lead-in time from submission of a planning application to commissioning has been seven years 10 months for the three most recently built hospitals for which the information is available.

Employment

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest available figures of employment in the following sectors in Wales: *(a)* coal mining, deep-mined and opencast, *(b)* banking, *(c)* steel manufacture, *(d)* dock work, *(e)* railways and *(f)* construction.

Mr. Peter Walker: Employment estimates for sectors *(b)*, *(e)* and *(f)* are available from the Department of Employment's quarterly series and are given in the table. Information for sectors *(a)*, *(c)* and *(d)* is not available from this source.

Employees in employment at September 1989

	Thousands
(b) Banking (and bill discounting)	[1]11·9
(e) Railways	5·8
(f) Construction	44·0

[1] Total employment in the financial services sector amounted to 68,000.

Figures for dock work are included in the supporting services for sea transport category for which there were estimated to be 3,300 employees in employment in September 1989.

British Coal produces the most recent figures available for the deep-mined coal mining sector. There were, on average, 4,100 employees on colliery books in the year up to 31 October 1989. The latest available information on opencast coal mining is from the census of employment, September 1987 when there were 1,400 employees in employment.

Statistics compiled by the British Steel Corporation and the United Kingdom Statistics Bureau show that there were 19,400 employees in the steel industry in December 1988.

Road Improvement

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has proposals to improve the roads between Welshpool and the English border; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The A458 Buttington Cross-Wollaston Cross improvement is planned to start in the period April 1991-March 1994, as indicated in table 6 of "Roads in Wales—Progress and Plans for the 1990s".

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to issue a statement of policy to guide the proposed Countryside Council for Wales in the exercise of its powers from 1 April 1991.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have placed copies of the draft statement of policy in the Libraries of both Houses and copies have also been placed in the Vote Office.

It is customary for such statements to be determined following discussions between the sponsor Department and the board of the organisation concerned, taking due account of any comments that may be received from other interested organisations. The draft statement will accordingly form the basis of discussions with the new Countryside Council for Wales when the relevant appointments are made.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide for the index-linking of all pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to index-link pensions to earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single-pensioner households in Scotland are in receipt or have been in receipt of housing benefit for each of the past five years, expressed as a percentage of all single-pensioner households and as a numerical total.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. In 1988 in Scotland, an estimated 250,000 single people aged 60 or over were receiving housing benefit. This represents 11·3 per cent. of the total single-person population aged 60 or over in Scotland.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures for the total number of *(a)* single parents in Scotland, *(b)* single-parent households in Scotland and *(c)* single-parent households in Scotland in receipt of housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* We do not hold precise information about the single-parent population in Scotland. It is broadly estimated that in 1986 there were 100,000 single parents in Scotland, including single households which cannot be identified separately. I regret that comparative information for housing benefit is not available before May 1988 when an estimated 80,000 single parents in Scotland were receiving benefit.

Taxation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for *(a)* 1960, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1980 and *(d)* the latest year, the number of married couples (i) with children and *(b)* without children when (i) both or (ii) only one partner works and pays tax; and if he will estimate the numbers below the tax threshold.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The available information is shown in the table:

1989-90 (millions)

	[2] *Above tax threshold*	[3] *Below tax threshold*
Married couples with children		
Both partners working	3·1	0·1
Only one[1] partner working	2·0	0·2
Married couples without children		
Both partners working	3·0	0·1
Only one[1] partner working	1·3	0·3

Note:
Figures for the earlier years are not available.
Source:
Figures from 1987 FES uprated to 1989-90.
[1] Either husband or wife.
[2] Tax unit pays tax.
[3] Tax unit does not pay tax.

Pensioners

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of pensioners' organisations; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We regularly meet representatives from pensioners' organisations. Most recently my right hon. Friend the Minister of State accompanied the Prime Minister at a meeting with a delegation from the National Pensioners' Convention and discussed a range of issues of concern to it.

Community Charge

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any additional information on the income levels up to which community charge benefits will be payable for the personal circumstances contained in the reply to the hon. Member for Taunton of 1 November 1989, *Official Report*, columns *233-34*, on a community charge in 1990-91 of £350.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton on 1 November 1989 showed the relevant income levels using the benefit rates applicable from 1 April 1990 on an assumed community charge of £350. I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many Scots are eligible for poll tax rebates at less than the maximum rate in 1989-90;

(2) how many Scots are receiving the maximum 80 per cent. poll tax rebate in 1989-90;

(3) how many single householders in Scotland are *(a)* eligible for the maximum 80 per cent. poll tax rebate and *(b)* eligible for poll tax rebate at less than the maximum rate, in 1989-90.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* Information is available only on numbers estimated to be receiving community charge rebates, not numbers eligible. In 1989-90, some 320,000 claimants in Scotland are receiving rebates at less than the maximum rate and 560,000 at the maximum rate. About 280,000 single householders are receiving maximum rebate and 120,000 less than the maximum. Claims from couples are counted as one.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) of 26 February, *Official Report*,

columns *56-58*, if he will give for each of the social security offices listed *(a)* their single payment expenditure in 1987-88, *(b)* their social fund expenditure on loans and grants for 1988-89, *(c)* their social fund expenditure on loans and grants for the first nine months of 1989-90, *(d)* their current refusal rate for social fund applications and *(e)* the extra allocation of social fund money they have received.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is either in the Library or can be derived from that information.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the expenditure during the current financial year to date, and in the previous financial year, by way of *(a)* social fund loans and *(b)* grants for each social security area office in Wales.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the Library.

Disability

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure deaf students will continue to be eligible for *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* unemployment benefit following the introduction of top-up loans for students.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We propose that those deaf students who meet the criteria for the disability premium will continue to be eligible for income support and housing benefit. This will include any deaf student in receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance, and those who are also registered blind. Students whose sole disability is deafness are among the least likely to have additional weekly living expenses because of their disability of the kind that income support and housing benefit are intended to meet. Deaf students who face additional costs in connection with their course of study will continue to be eligible for the disabled students allowance under the mandatory award arrangements. We also propose that all full-time students will be excluded from unemployment benefit since students have removed themselves from the labour market and are not unemployed.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure that all disabled students will continue to be eligible for *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* unemployment benefit following the introduction of top-up loans for students.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We propose that students who meet the criteria for the disability premium will continue to be eligible for income support and housing benefit. This will include any student in receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance and students who are registered blind. We also propose that all full-time students will be excluded from unemployment benefit since students have removed themselves from the labour market and are not unemployed.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the European Community's programme to assist handicapped people has been apportioned between the individual states; and how the United Kingdom's allocation is to be used.

Mr. Scott: The amount allocated to the programme, called HELIOS, was not divided between member states but assigned to the various aspects of the programme, the majority going towards the development of HANDYNET, the multilingual computerised database of information on disability questions.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department of Social Security currently employs 159 internal auditors at an annual cost of £3·08 million. A total of 94 internal audit reports were produced in 1989. None was drawn to the attention of Ministers.

No social security internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms.

Children in Hospital (Parental Visits)

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the travel expenses as detailed in his most recent annual report of the number of requests his Department's offices received from parents to visit children in hospital, a profile of the amounts granted and refused and a breakdown by region, county or district.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 29 January 1990 at column *34*.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people currently receive invalid care allowance; and how many of them are on income support.

Mr. Scott: The estimated average number receiving invalid care allowance in 1989-90 is 110,000. The latest information is that at May 1988 there were some 8,000 income support recipients where invalid care allowance was also in payment to themselves or their partner.

Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he gave to the constitutional implications before he laid regulation 72, Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations, S.I., 1986 No. 2218; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Prior to the introduction of regulation 72 of the Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986, arrears of social security benefits payable as a result of the review of a decision were generally restricted to 12 months, even though the decision was erroneous because of official error, including an error of law by the adjudication officer.

Regulation 72, which came into force on 6 April 1987, was designed to enable the statutory payment of arrears of benefit in full where there had been an underpayment of

benefit that was solely attributable to a mistake on the part of an official, including an adjudication officer. However, legal advice revealed that regulation 72 had an unintended side effect in that where a social security commissioner, or higher judicial authority, overturned the prevailing interpretation of the law, adjudication officers' decisions given prior to that new interpretation fell to be described as errors of law, even though they were made in good faith and in accordance with the interpretation of the law at the time.

As a result, with effect from 1 September 1987, the 12-month limitation on arrears was reimposed where adjudication officers reviewed decisions in consequence of a reinterpretation of the law by a commissioner or higher appellate body.

Relocation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the criteria used in deciding *(a)* to relocate offices of his Department and *(b)* where to relocate offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 21 February 1990]:* The decision to relocate some processing work from 21 inner London local social security offices to three social security centres in Glasgow, Makerfield and Belfast was announced to the House by the former Secretary of State on 16 January 1989 at columns *46–47*. None of the 21 local offices is to be closed and the whole project is driven by our desire to improve the quality of our service to our customers.

The local offices were selected using the systematic application of the following criteria:

where the service to the public was most likely to be improved

where staff recruitment or retention problems were particularly severe

where working conditions for staff were poor

which combination of offices would produce a sensible pattern of service on the ground.

The selection of the locations for the three social security centres was the result of the systematic analysis of the 335 travel-to-work areas in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, against the following criteria:

a work force big enough to sustain 500 clerical jobs;

good educational standards;

assisted area status;

recent Department of Social Security experience that recruitment and retention was good;

availability of suitable buildings or sites suitable for a fast build;

where we could make the best contribution to offering alternative posts to our staff who would otherwise be surplus to requirements when our computerisation programme is complete.

SCOTLAND

Home Security

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what portion of local authorities' housing budgets are devoted to improving security of homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally. It is for individual authorities to determine their own policies and priorities within the resources available.

Housing (Glasgow)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when was the last discussion between a Minister and Glasgow district council on the matter of housing capital programmes; and what decisions have been taken by him since then which affect the capital programme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I paid a housing visit to Glasgow district council on 2 February. Since then I have announced a supplementary capital allocation of £3·5 million to Glasgow district council to support work in the public and private sectors in the current financial year.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and those for which the Lord Advocate is responsible and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At 2 March 1990 28 staff and five staff were employed on internal audit duties in the Scottish Office and in my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate's Departments, at a total cost of about £800,000 and £85,000 respectively. A total of 69 reports were produced in the Scottish Office in 1989, none of which required to be referred to my right hon. and learned Friend or other ministerial colleagues. A total of 22 reports were produced in my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate's Departments, one of which was drawn to the attention of the Minister. No internal audit work is undertaken by private sector firms.

Farming

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers, partners, directors and farm workers were employed in each county in Scotland in *(a)* June and *(b)* December 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish counties ceased to be used for agricultural statistics purposes after 1975 following local government reform. The number of farmers and farm workers in June 1989, by local authority region, is shown in the table; partners and directors are not separately enumerated in the June agricultural census but are included either as farmers or farm workers:

Region	*Number of farmers*	*Number of farmworkers*
Islands	2,166	901
Highland	2,817	1,901
Grampian	4,689	5,095
Tayside	2,073	3,036
Fife	744	1,613
Lothian	758	1,764
Borders	1,281	2,507
Central	786	1,027
Strathclyde	4,288	5,458
Dumfries and Galloway	2,352	3,938
Scotland	21,954	27,940

The December survey is based on returns from only a sample of farmers and is not designed to produce statistics of the agricultural labour force at regional level.

Job Clubs

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest job entry rates for people in job clubs in Scotland, broken down by regional area.

Mr. Lang: The information sought is not available in the form requested as it is possible to provide a breakdown only by employment service areas. On 26 January 1990 for these areas of Scotland the cumulative job entry rates for people in job clubs were as set out in the table:

Area	*Jobclub job entry rate per cent.*
Lothian and Borders	58
Glasgow North and Dumbarton	50
Ayrshire, Dumfries, Galloway, Inverclyde and Argyll	59
Lanarkshire and Central	57
Highlands, Islands and Grampian	59
Tayside and Fife	62
Glasgow South and Renfrew	55
Scotland	57

Training Schemes

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many providers of employment training and youth training schemes in Scotland have attained approved training organisation status broken down by regional area.

Mr. Lang: To date, no employment training agent or training manager in Scotland has attained full approved training organisation status.

Information about the number of youth training scheme managing agents in Scotland who have attained approved training organisation status is available only by Training Agency area as set out in the table:

Number of approved training organisations

Area	*Number*
Grampian and Tayside	46
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	39
Central and Fife	59
Glasgow City	56
Highlands and Islands	33
Lanarkshire	36
Lothian and Borders	61
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	57
Total	387

Bellsdyke Hospital

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the Scottish hospital advisory service on Bellsdyke hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library today.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take urgent action to deal with the inadequate standards of staffing, accommodation and other resources, referred to in the report of the Scottish hospital advisory service on Bellsdyke hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish hospital advisory service (SHAS) is a Government-funded "watchdog" service with an independent remit. Its report on Bellsdyke hospital contains both criticism and praise and has been sent to Forth Valley health board to consider the findings and recommendations in the normal way. The board will advise the Scottish Home and Health Department of its proposals for follow-up action shortly. The board's strategic plans already address problems at the hospital and the recent SHAS report helps focus the attention of both the Department and the board upon the most pressing areas for action.

Further Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been paid out in non-recurrent grants under the Further Education (Approved Associations) (Scotland) Grant Regulations 1989; and to which bodies.

Mr. Lang: The information for 1989-90 for each education authority area is set out in the table. The figures include estimates, where appropriate, of grant still to be claimed before 31 March 1990.

Non recurrent grants under the Further Education (Approved Associations) (Scotland) Grant Regulations 1989 Year 1989-90

	Amount of grant £
Borders Region	
Blainslie Village Hall Committee	1,964
Southdean Village Hall Committee	1,250
Denholm Village Hall Committee	1,500
Morebattle Institute	573
Lothian Park Youth Group	20,000
	25,287
Central Region	
Gartmore Association	16,810
Menzies Hall Management Committee	20,000
Trossachs Welfare Association	12,578
Gargunnock Community Association	5,000
Buchanan Hall Users Committee	5,300
Brachead Community Project	5,000
	64,688
Dumfries and Galloway Region	
Irongray Hall Committee	5,987
Murray Hall Committee	4,332
Locharbriggs Village Hall Committee	4,615
Collin Hall Management Committee	7,477
Middlebie Community Centre Committee	642
New Abbey Hall Committee	19,250
	42,303
Fife Region	
15th West Fife (Freuchie) Scout Group	6,500
Newton of Falkland Hall Committee	2,400
Cairneyhill Community Youth Foundation	12,500
Auchtermuchty Community Centre Association	19,550
	40,950
Grampian Region	
Buckie Girl Guides Association	3,402
Milltimber Community Association	10,837
Portsoy Institute Hall Association	194
Woodside Facilities Trust	3,301
Fettercairn Public Property Committee	2,669
Richmond Memorial Hall Committee	54,333
Echt Hall Association	4,740
Finzean Community Association	569
Rothienorman Hall Committee	952
Fordoun Memorial Hall Committee	1,043
Ritchie Hall Committee, Strichen	882

	Amount of grant £
Kemnay Public Hall Committee	79
Newtonhill Community Association	1,573
Duffus Village Hall Committee	5,603
Gourdon Public Hall Committee	19,353
Culter and District Community Association	500
Margach Hall Committee	4,913
Craigievar Hall Committee	5,000
Premnay Village Hall Committee	3,500
Roseisle Village Hall Committee	990
Logie Coldstone Hall Committee	2,555
Peterhead Sea Cadet Unit	4,000
Burghead Village Hall Committee	2,473
Melvin Hall Committee	10,000
Hatton of Fintray Hall Committee	12,332
Chapel of Garioch Hall Committee	10,000
1st Dyce Scout Group	10,000
	175,793
Highland region	
31st Aviemore Scouts	6,342
Dunvegan Community Hall Association	53,668
Kyleakin Village Hall Committee	7,130
Stratherrick Public Hall Committee	510
Edderton Hall Committee	6,500
Kinlochewe Village Hall Committee	2,397
Kyle of Lochalsh Public Hall Committee	16,048
Kinlochbervie Village Hall Committee	3,383
Balnain Village Hall Committee	77
Melness Community Centre Association	1,428
Carrbridge Village Hall Committee	1,406
Embo Community Centre Association	6,759
Pentland Hall Committee	1,309
Lairg Community Centre Association	6,417
Dornoch and District Community Association	2,697
Invershin Village Hall Committee	25,000
North Kessock Amenities Association	4,523
Invergarry Hall Committee	201
Brittania Hall Committee, Dunnet	2,779
Lochinver Public Hall Committee	14,000
	162,574
Lothian region	
Pathhead and District Community Association	3,707
1st Lothian (Gorebridge) Scout Group	26,500
6th West Lothian Scout Group	3,025
2nd West Midlothian Scout Group	3,807
	37,039
Strathclyde region	
Girl Guides County of Dumbarton	22,292
19th Ayrshire Scout Group	7,500
37th Ayrshire Scout Group	19,162
6th Ayrshire Sea Scout Group	445
Renfrewshire Girl Guides Association	20,000
42nd Renfrewshire (Kilmacolm) Scout Group	9,000
65th Ayrshire Scout Group	4,600
4th East Kilbride Scout Group	3,222
48th Ayrshire Scout Group	1,191
St. Columba's Boys Club	2,366
Dervaig Village Hall Committee	2,116
Bunessan Community Association	56,903
Brookfield Village Council	24,566
Jura Hall Committee	29,000
Rhinns Hall Committee	12,275
North Connel Village Hall Committee	1,093
Darnley Street Family Project Association	10,538
	226,269
Tayside region	
Broughty Ferry Scout Council	967
Forfar Old Age Pensioners Association	7,188
9th Angus (Brechin) Scout Group	5,002
Carnbo Village Hall Committee	3,605
Kirriemuir Scout Group	12,250
Bridge of Earn Institute	5,844
Monikie War Memorial Hall Committee	2,503
	37,359
Orkney Islands	
Orkney Girl Guides Association	5,040
Rendall Community Association	32,387
Stenness Community Association	1,727
Wyre Community Association	1,331
	40,485
Shetland Islands	
North Unst Public Hall Committee	28,957
South Nesting Public Hall Committee	21,352
Walls Public Hall Committee	28,874
Symbister Public Hall Committee	31,655
	110,838
Western Isles	
Stoneybridge Community Centre Association	4,922
Southend Community Hall Committee	40,000
	44,922
Total for Scotland	1,008,507

Takare plc

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to announce when Greater Glasgow health board expects to complete the contract with Takare plc.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 February 1990]:* I have today given Greater Glasgow health board approval to finalise contractual arrangements with Takare plc for the provision of 120 beds for the elderly and elderly with dementia in Rutherglen. This is to be welcomed as an innovative collaboration between Greater Glasgow health board and Takare. It will provide a modern appropriate environment with the highest standards of care for the elderly. This will be achieved more rapidly than the board could otherwise guarantee. The costs will be lower than the board's present costs with savings being reinvested in further improvements in health care for patients in the Greater Glasgow health board area. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will welcome these improvements in the care of the elderly in his constituency.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he has implemented to ensure that recruitment and promotion policy in his Department does not directly or indirectly discriminate against applicants who were mature students or women returning to work following a career break due to child care.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* My Department as a matter of course provides guidance for members of recruitment and promotion boards which includes reference to the need to avoid discrimination of

this kind. The practice of my Department, subject to certain conditions, is to reinstate all applicants who originally resigned for domestic reasons. Previous service is taken into account for pay and seniority purposes and, in certain circumstances, previous performance assessments count towards eligibility for promotion boards. In addition, plans are in hand to introduce short answer tests as an alternative to formal education qualifications for recruitment at administrative assistant and administrative officer level and to extend special leave arrangements to allow staff breaks in employment of up to five years with automatic right of re-engagement.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

20. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to make a further visit to Hong Kong in the immediate future. I hope to visit in the next few months.

30. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will pay an official visit to Green Island.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to do so.

Estonia

21. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has received a copy of the declaration of the General Assembly in Estonia on independent statehood of 2 February; and whether he sent any message to the Estonian Parliament to coincide with the Estonian national day on 24 February.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received a copy of the declaration. He did not send a message in connection with the Estonian national day.

British Hovercraft Expedition

22. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to give publicity and assistance to the British hovercraft expedition to China from Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The organisers of this expedition have been in close touch with the ODA, as well as the British embassy and British Council in Peking, and the British trade commission in Hong Kong, which have given advice on commercial sponsorship and publicity. The British ambassador in Peking has also donated £1,000 toward the purchase of solar refrigerators for the expedition. The objectives of this expedition are admirable, and I wish it well.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

23. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions his Department has held with the Palestine Liberation Organisation representatives about the abandonment of terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens and others.

Mr. Waldegrave: We take every opportunity to stress to the PLO the importance of its maintaining its commitment to refrain from terrorism. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did so most recently when he saw Bassam Abu Sharif on 1 March.

35. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made any representations to the Palestine Liberation Organisation with respect to terrorist attacks undertaken by Fatah against Israeli civilian targets within Israel's 1967 borders, since December 1988.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made clear to both the PLO and Israel that we deplore violence from whatever quarter and look to them to resolve their differences through face-to-face negotiations.

Albania

24. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made recently on Albanian human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 21 February, at the current session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, we and our EC partners expressed our concern at the reports of recurring violations of human rights and particularly religious persecution in Albania.

German Unification

25. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on his policy on the issue of German unification.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have long supported the principle of German unification, to be brought about as the result of the freely expressed choice of the peoples of the two Germanys. Alongside self-determination goes the need for joint determination of external issues. This need will be fulfilled through the framework agreed in Ottawa and through other consultations.

58. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Federal Republic of Germany counterpart concerning German reunification and the position of existing international boundaries.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had regular meetings with Mr. Genscher, most recently when he called on the Prime Minister on 15 February. My right hon. Friend shall be seeing him in Bonn on 12 March to discuss a number of subjects of mutual interest, including the external aspects of German unification.

73. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United Kingdom's European Economic Community partners about the reunification of Germany.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last discussed German unification with his EC colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council on 5 March. We are looking forward to further discussion at the informal EC summit proposed by the Presidency for 28 April.

EC-United States Relationship

26. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to strengthen the relationship between the European Community and the United States.

68. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to strengthen the relationship between the European Community and the United States.

Mr. Maude: We have set out a framework for a strengthened EC-US relationship. We have proposed more frequent ministerial meetings, closer consultation between officials on political co-operation subjects and more regular high-level dialogue on Community issues. We want to create with these elements a new transatlantic consultative partnership. A package on the lines we have proposed has gained wide support within the Community and in the United States.

South Africa

27. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the conditions and prerequisites which he considers that the United Kingdom and its European Community partners should adopt for the abandonment of sanctions against South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Community's ultimate objective is the achievement of a democratic multiracial system in South Africa through peaceful means. As South Africa progresses towards that goal we believe it would be right for the Community to make a measured response by lifting some of its restrictive measures.

29. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: We will maintain our policy of encouragement and pressure on the South African Government to bring about an end to apartheid, giving a measured response to progress.

31. **Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with whom he hopes to have consultations on his coming visit to southern Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: During any visit to South Africa, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs would hope to have consultations with a wide range of opinion across the political spectrum.

54. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he now proposes to make a visit to the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to visit South Africa soon, perhaps at the time of Namibian independence.

61. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of South Africa regarding Walvis bay.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. It is for the Government of an independent Namibia to decide how they wish to approach negotiations with South Africa on Walvis bay. We remain committed to the principle of UNSCR 432 that Walvis bay should be reintegrated into Namibia. We and our contact group partners have made clear our willingness to offer diplomatic support, if required, to achieve a successful negotiation.

62. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the subject of the Government's policy on sanctions against South Africa since the release of Nelson Mandela.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received representations from members of the public, hon. Members of this House and from certain organisations.

66. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the Government's policy on sanctions against South Africa.

70. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government now propose to take to encourage the end of apartheid within South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: We will maintain our policy of encouragement and pressure on the South African Government to bring about an end to apartheid, giving a measured response to progress.

72. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received with regard to the recent march by Mrs. Winnie Mandela and 50,000 people to present an ultimatum and its implications for Government policy on South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received no representations on this subject.

Kashmir

28. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to visit India to discuss disputed territory in Kashmir.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to be able to make an early visit to India, but has no current plans.

Iraq

32. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have received to their protests, made last year, to the Iraqi authorities over their use of chemical weapons against Iraq's minority Kurdish population.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Iraqi Foreign Minister gave a public undertaking in September 1988 that Iraq would not resort to the use of chemical weapons. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to this policy at the Paris conference on chemical weapons in January 1989. We take these undertakings seriously and expect the Iraqi Government to honour them.

Nicaragua

33. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to receive the report from David Browning on the conduct of the elections in Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to receive the report from David Browning on the conduct of the elections in Nicaragua; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have already received a preliminary report from Dr. Browning. We expect to receive his definitive report on his return to the United Kingdom. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House at the earliest opportunity.

In this preliminary report, Dr. Browning said that, despite a campaign in which the FSLN made maximum use of the inbuilt bias towards it in the prevailing political system and of its control of the state apparatus, the evidence of the polls was that the people of Nicaragua were able to make their choice in a secret and properly administered vote.

40. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet with the newly elected Government of Nicaragua.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no present plans to meet members of the newly elected Government.

67. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the outcome of the Nicaraguan elections.

Mr. Sainsbury: The election, which all observers judged to be free and fair, gave the people of Nicaragua an opportunity to exercise their right to choose their own Government. We warmly welcome this development, which marks a further strengthening of democracy in the region.

45. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom-Nicaraguan relations following the election in Nicaragua.

69. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to review his policy concerning Nicaragua.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider changing United Kingdom policy towards Nicaragua.

Mr. Sainsbury: It remains our policy to support the Esquipulas II peace agreement and, in particular, its provisions for the establishment of pluralistic democracies throughout central America. The election of 25 February marked a further welcome development in this process, and we look forward to working with the Government of Mrs. Chamorro.

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States on the conduct and outcome of the recent elections in Nicaragua.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have regular discussiens with the United States Administration on a wide range of subjects, including Nicaragua.

Central America

34. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed prospects for peace in central America with the Government of the United States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed prospects for peace in central America with the Government of the United States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have regular discussions with the United States Administration on a wide range of subjects, including central America.

United States Secretary of State

36. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the United States Secretary of State; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no firm plans for his next meeting with the United States Secretary of State.

China

37. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit the Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so.

Jordan

38. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any reports on military co-operation between Jordan and Iraq; and whether he will make a statement on the future of British military assistance to Jordan.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a long history of military co-operation between Jordan and its Arab friends,

including Iraq, although recent reports about the extent of the latter appear exaggerated. Military assistance will remain an important element in our close and friendly relations with Jordan.

Council of Ministers

39. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues he expects to discuss at the next General Affairs Council of Ministers meeting.

Mr. Maude: We expect a range of EC issues to be discussed.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Hurd: The Foreign Affairs Council met on 5 March. The Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations is due to end in December 1990. The European Commission, which negotiates on behalf of member states, will report to the Council on the current status of the negotiations. Ministers are expected to discuss proposals from the Commission on European Community policy on Japanese car imports after 1992. Ministers will adopt the draft negotiating mandate for an EC-Czechoslovakia trade and co-operation agreement and the Commission may seek member states' views on the timing of the conclusion of an EC-GDR trade and co-operation agreement. Ministers are also expected to discuss preparations for the forthcoming inter-governmental conference and to consider proposals for the site of the European Environment Agency. The Commission will report on how it intends to respond to the Council's declaration at Strasbourg that there should be a substantial increase in EC aid to the occupied territories. The Council will endorse the Community's position for the EC-GCC joint council to be held in Muscat on 17 March.

The Agricultural Council met on 5, 6 and possibly 7 March to discuss the annual price fixing and possibly non-food uses of agricultural products, bovine semen, the amendment of regulation 857/84 (milk) and the position on the adoption of agricultural structures regulations. It will also meet on 26 and 27 March to discuss the annual price fixing and possibly non-food uses of agricultural products, medicated feedingstuffs and pesticide residues.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 12 March to discuss the Commission's progress in the fight against fraud as set out in its first annual report, the Court of Auditors' report on the 1988 budget to inform an opinion from the Council to the European Parliament on granting the Commission a discharge in respect of the implementation of the 1988 budget, a revision of the financial perspective with an aim for agreement on Commission proposals for a substantive revision of the financial perspective for 1991 and 1992, the proposed revised Council decisions on economic convergence and co-operation between central banks, economic surveillance procedures during stage I of economic and monetary union, and a proposal to increase the borrowing limit for loans made by EURATOM. Ministers are also expected to discuss the need for early production of the Commission's revised VAT technical proposals and the need for rapid decisions thereafter.

At the Industry Council on 13 March, the Commission is expected to introduce a proposal for a Council directive on the creation of a restoration certificate. The certificate would in effect extend the term of patent protection of a pharmaceutical product from the present 20 years in most EC states, to a maximum of 30 years. The Commission will argue that such a measure is necessary to compensate for the increasing time taken for new drugs to obtain the safety approval without which they cannot be placed on the market. The Council will consider Commission reports on the future of the EC textiles and clothing industry, the trade barriers operated by other countries against EC textiles and clothing exports, and the possibility of establishing a central body ("observatory") to provide statistics in this sector. The Council will also consider a Commission report on the Community footwear industry. The report outlines measures the Commission believes the industry needs to adopt to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the completion of the single market. It lays much stress on increased EC collaboration in R and D, the development of profession training, and improvements in production process by means of technical innovation and modernisation. A discussion will take place on the need for a regulatory framework for biotechnology in the Community.

At the Environment Council on 22 March Ministers may discuss further the proposed Environment Agency. It is hoped that the proposal to establish a committee to facilitate amendment of directives on drinking water, bathing water and surface water will be adopted. The Council is hoping for agreement on a resolution on the proposal for a Community strategy on waste management, and there is likely to be detailed discussion and the possible adoption of the proposal to guarantee the public freedom of access to data on the environment. A detailed discussion is expected leading to the possible adoption of the proposal to protect waters from pollution by nitrates. An early exchange of views is expected on the proposal to consolidate European anti-pollution standards for all categories of vehicles; EC member states are required to introduce tighter gaseous emission standards for cars over 1400 cc by 31 December 1992. There is likely to be a discussion on a Community position on the adoption of severe measures to protect the ozone layer in the light of the forthcoming renegotiation of the Montreal protocol.

The Transport Council will meet on 29 March. Further discussion will take place on the detail of proposals for a second stage of air transport liberalisation, for increasing the Community road haulage quotas by 40 per cent. for 1990, 1991 and 1992 and for fixing maximum authorised dimensions for road trains. There will also be some discussion of the Commission's railway policy proposals, centering on combined transport and possibly leading to discussion of transport infrastructure and the problems of transit through third countries. There may be some discussion of EUROS and of the liberalisation of shipping, of passenger transport by coach and bus and an exchange of views on fiscal harmonisation in the road haulage sector.

Drugs

41. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international measures are in hand to combat the drugs trade.

Mr. Sainsbury: Some 90 states, including the United Kingdom, have now signed the 1988 United Nations

convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs recently addressed a United Nations special session on drugs in New York, which adopted a political declaration and a global programme of action. We will host a world ministerial summit in London in April to look at ways of reducing the demand for drugs and combating the cocaine threat. Within Europe, anti-drugs co-operation takes place in a number of fora, notably with our European Community partners and within the Pompidou group, which the United Kingdom chairs. The United Kingdom has played an active part in the work of the financial action task force set up by the Paris economic summit to consider measures to combat money laundering.

56. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part Britain is playing in international efforts to defeat the drugs trade.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British Government will host a world ministerial summit in London in April to look at ways of reducing the demand for drugs and combating the cocaine threat. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs addressed a United Nations special session on drugs in New York. The United Kingdom is one of some 90 states to have signed the United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. We have signed bilateral agreements or arrangements to trace, freeze and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking with 13 countries. We co-operate closely with our European neighbours in a number of fora, and have played an active part in the work of the financial action task force set up by the Paris economic summit to consider measures to combat money laundering.

Brazil

42. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the results of the visit of Senor Collor de Mello, President-elect of Brazil.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Senor Collor de Mello on 7 February. On 8 February he had meetings with HRH the Prince of Wales, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and several Cabinet colleagues. During conversations which covered trade, the environment, debt and many other bilateral and international matters, Senor Collor impressed us with his grasp of a wide range of issues and his determination to tackle Brazil's economic and social problems. We wish him well and look forward to working with him and his Administration when he is inaugurated President on 15 March. My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President will represent Her Majesty the Queen at the inauguration. I shall also attend.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

43. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement regarding the United Kingdom's relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Waldegrave: Anglo-Soviet relations are better than ever. We are moving cautiously but steadily from an era of confrontation to one of co-operation in an increasingly wide range of areas.

76. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met a representative of the Soviet Government; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Mr. Shevardnadze in Ottawa on 13 February. Their discussions focused on developments in Europe.

Eastern Europe

44. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit eastern Europe.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any further plans to visit eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Hungary from 27 February to 1 March and the GDR from 22 to 24 January. He hopes to visit Poland soon. He has no further plans to visit other eastern European countries at present. I visited Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia from 25 to 28 February, Romania from 15 to 17 January and Poland and Hungary last year.

53. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds have been committed by Her Majesty's Government for environmental aid to eastern European countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 2 February 1990, Vol. 166, column *403*.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a regular bulletin relating to visa requirements to be posted in British consulates in eastern Europe for the benefit of intending travellers to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information about United Kingdom visa requirements is available to intending travellers at all British embassies in eastern Europe. This information is regularly updated to take account of changes in the immigration rules or other administrative requirements.

Developing Nations (Debt)

46. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government propose to take in the forthcoming year as regards the debt burden of developing nations.

Mr. Maude: For those indebted countries pursuing economic reforms, we will continue to provide financial assistance through the IMF and World Bank, the rescheduling of official debts in the Paris club and, where appropriate, bilateral aid. We will also continue to implement the special measures for the poorest debtors agreed at the 1988 Toronto economic summit. For

middle-income debtors, specific support for commercial bank debt reduction operations will continue to be available through the IMF and World Bank.

Sri Lanka

47. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has recently made to the Government of Sri Lanka concerning that country's human rights record; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have made clear to the Sri Lankan Government our concerns about human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. Our High Commissioner discussed the matter with President Premadasa on 28 February. We welcome the positive measures which the President has taken recently.

Namibia

48. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government will make available to Namibia following independence.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are actively discussing with the future Government of Namibia how we can best help them after independence, in particular through the aid programme.

Middle East

49. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

55. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's contribution to finding a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict acceptable to the international community.

65. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We support the current efforts to promote a dialogue between Israel and representative Palestinians as an important step towards a settlement.

United Nations Peacekeeping Forces

50. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what troops, equipment and services the Government are ready, in principle, to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping forces in 1990.

Mr. Sainsbury: We already provide contingents for the United Nations forces in Cyprus and Namibia, and logistic support for those in Lebanon and the Golan. We shall look sympathetically on any new request.

51. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the recent murder of United Nations personnel by Israeli forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We share the regret expressed by the United Nations Secretary-General at the death on 19 February of two Nepalese soldiers serving with UNIFIL.

European Commission

52. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the President of the European Commission.

Mr. Hurd: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Brussels on 5 March. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed progress and prospects for the GATT Uruguay round, reffirmed its commitment to a successful outcome and agreed on the need for EC initiatives, particularly on the settlement of disputes. The United Kingdom stressed the importance of making progress on agriculture.

The Council accepted that the Commission on its own responsibility should begin discussion with the Japanese on the future regime for imports of Japanese cars. The United Kingdom pressed for a liberal approach, arguing that there should be no restrictions on cars produced by Japanese-owned firms in the United Kingdom.

In a brief discussion of eastern Europe, the Council approved the Commission's negotiating mandate for a trade and commercial and economic co-operation agreement with Czechoslovakia. The Commission also reported on the recent fact-finding mission to Belgrade. The United Kingdom suggested that for purposes of future EC aid Yugoslavia should be treated primarily as an east European rather than a Mediterranean country. Herr Genscher briefed his colleagues on the latest developments over German unification and its external consequences, which Ministers then discussed.

The Council approved a Commission report on future EC assistance to the occupied territories following the commitment at the Strasbourg European Council to double the volume of EC aid to the territories.

Ministers discussed preparations for the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union, initiated the formal procedure for consulting the European Parliament and agreed to consider arrangements for informal dialogue with the Parliament.

There was also discussion of the siting of the European Environment Agency, the European bank for reconstruction and development (EBRD) and other Community institutions. The United Kingdom pressed the merits of Cambridge and London to host the Environment Agency and EBRD respectively.

Lebanon (Hostages)

57. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps have been taken by his Department to seek to secure the release of British hostages held in the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of 30 January to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), Vol. 166, column *125*.

Czechoslovakia

59. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government are currently giving to Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: The existing know-how funds for Poland and Hungary are to be expanded to cover other eastern European countries once they are fully committed to reform. We hope to extend the fund to Czechoslovakia and will discuss with the Czechoslovak Government what form this assistance should take.

NATO

60. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Secretary-General of NATO and what will be discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had a very useful meeting with Dr. Woerner in Brussels on 5 March. They discussed developments in Europe as they affect NATO, and agreed on the importance of consultations within the Alliance on the security aspects of German unification. They identified the need for an early discussion of all these issues at ministerial level.

Kiyoaki Tanaka

63. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Thai Government regarding the granting of an amnesty for war crimes to Kiyoaki Tanaka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Israel

64. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase the complement of the consulate in Jerusalem in order to monitor more effectively Israeli human rights practices in the occupied territories.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consulate-general in Jerusalem is doing an excellent job with its existing complement. We see no grounds at present for increasing this although, as with all Her Majesty's missions overseas, the situation is kept under regular review.

71. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to support the European Economic Community decision to review scientific agreements with Israel because of its treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mr. Maude: There has been no such decision by the Community.

North Korea

74. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding relations with North Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: We do not recognise North Korea as a state, and accordingly have no relations with any authorities in North Korea.

Myamar

75. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position on relations with Myamar (formerly Burma).

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 27 February at column *111*.

Romania

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to provide further aid for handicapped children in Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the light of recent reports about the inadequacy of all forms of health care in Romania, we have sent emergency medical and food relief both directly and through the European Community. The total value of all aid sent so far by both routes, or now in the pipeline, is over £6 million. We are now considering what more can be done.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of people killed *(a)* before or *(b)* since the coup d'etat in Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Romanian authorities have told us that no reliable figures can yet be provided of the number of people injured during the revolution. But we are sceptical of reports that it ran into thousands.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he now has for a programme of aid to Vietnam.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are considering the possibility of supporting British NGO activities in Vietnam, in particular to help the communities in areas from which the boat people came.

Palestinian Political Leaders

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the United Nations to press the United States Government to permit access to its proceedings in New York for Palestinian political leaders.

Mr. Waldegrave: The question of access to proceedings in New York is for the United Nations to resolve in consultation with the United States Government in accordance with the headquarters agreement. There is an observer mission of Palestine at the United Nations and the head of the PLO political department visits the United Nations regularly.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the United States Secretary of State to remove restrictions on Palestinian political leaders entering the United States of America to address meetings and engage in political dialogue.

Mr. Waldegrave: It must be for the United States Government to decide who should or should not be

allowed to enter the United States. A number of leading Palestinians have visited the United States and addressed meetings there. We welcome this and the official US-PLO dialogue in Tunis.

EC Directives

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of how many directives under the 1992 programme the United Kingdom is in default of implementing in due time.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 9 January by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), which gave these details and confirmed our excellent record.

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of how many European Community directives the United Kingdom is the subject of complaint by the Commission for failure to implement correctly.

Mr. Maude: The Commission issued 22 preliminary requests for information from the United Kingdom in 1989 about possible failures to implement EC directives. Twelve have already been clarified satisfactorily. On a further eight, we have provided the Commission with details of implementation; and shall do likewise for the remaining two.

The United Kingdom's implementation record is among the best in the Community.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Sainsbury: The joint internal audit unit of the FCO, which serves both wings, employs 21 internal auditors at an estimated total cost of approximately £845,000 (excluding superannuation) for 1989-90. In 1989 the joint internal audit unit issued 64 audit reports; one of these was brought to the attention of a Minister in the FCO.

None of the work of the joint internal audit unit is subcontracted out, although the FCO has used private consultants on internal audit work on four occasions in the last five years, and once in the last year sought unsuccessfully to negotiate a consultancy.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, *Official Report*, 28 February, column *210*, on the communications with the European proliferation information centre (i) what recent letter he has received from the centre, (ii) what reply has been sent and (iii) what are the reasons for the proposed meeting between his Department and the centre, to which he made earlier reference, not taking place.

Mr. Waldegrave: The most recent correspondence received from the European proliferation information centre (EPIC) is a letter from Dr. David Lowry dated 23 February, our reply to which will be sent shortly. The offer to hold a meeting between this Department and EPIC was made in reply to EPIC's letter of 31 October, and we hope it will soon be possible to arrange a meeting.

UNICEF

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom's contribution to UNICEF in real and nominal terms for each year since 1974.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom contributions to UNICEF 1974-88

£ thousand

Year	*In current prices*		*In constant 1988 prices*	
	General contributions	*Special appeals*	*General contributions*	*Special appeals*
1974	1,300	—	5,329	—
1975	2,000	1,545	6,445	4,979
1976	2,300	—	6,442	—
1977	3,300	20	8,113	49
1978	4,500	2,032	9,936	4,486
1979	5,800	1,582	11,191	3,053
1980	4,400	591	7,102	954
1981	5,900	1,456	8,551	2,110
1982	5,900	83	7,945	112
1983	6,000	69	7,673	88
1984	6,000	25	7,333	31
1985	6,300	2,100	7,289	2,430
1986	6,500	1,808	7,264	2,020
1987	7,000	5,000	7,463	5,331
[1]1988	3,750	8,473	3,750	8,473
[2 3]1989	11,750	1,362	10,981	1,273

[1] The 1988 general contributions should have totalled £7,500,000, but a payment of £3,750,000 was delayed.

[2] The 1989 general contributions include the delayed payment of £3,750,000 made in respect of 1988.

[3] Provisional figures.

European Parliament Resolution

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received a copy of the European Parliament's resolution about amending the treaties, Community legislation and institutional reform of 23 November 1989 which the President was instructed to forward to all national Governments; and whether he will state Her Majesty's Government's policy towards it.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received a copy of the European Parliament's resolution to which my hon. Friend refers. We do not believe that treaty changes are necessary at this stage. The Foreign Affairs Council on 5 March discussed preparations for the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union, initiated the formal procedure for consulting the European Parliament and agreed to consider arrangements for informal dialogue with the Parliament.

Chile

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Chile after 11 March.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Chile; but my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President will represent Her Majesty the Queen at the inauguration of President Aylwin.

Mr. Vorng Ky

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the reasons for the delay in reaching a decision on the visa application of Mr. Vorng Ky of Cambodia; when a decision is to be expected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand that the Home Office wrote to the hon. Member on 5 March 1990, in response to her letter of 20 February 1990, requesting further details of Mr. Ky in order to trace his visa application. On receipt of this information I will also make appropriate inquiries of the overseas post concerned.

Helsinki Final Act

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the implementation by the Soviet Union and eastern European countries of the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act during the period 1 July to 31 December 1989.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have recently prepared a report on the implementation by the Soviet Union and eastern European countries of their CSCE commitments for this period. Copies will be deposited in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

RAF Bentwaters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) at what stage in the decision-making proposals are to station F-15E aircraft of the United States Air Force at RAF Bentwaters in Suffolk;

(2) how many F-15E aircraft would be supported by *(a)* the proposed field training facility and *(b)* the proposed conventional munitions shop at RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 6 February 1990, column *604*. No decisions have been taken to station F-15E aircraft at RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the deactivation of the 527 aggressor squadron at RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States Government recently announced their intention to withdraw the squadron of F-16 aircraft—the "aggressor squadron"—from RAF Bentwaters as part of a series of proposed changes in United States force levels in Europe. I understand that the aircraft are being placed in reserve at bases in Germany. The withdrawal of the aircraft themselves is now complete.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much will be the contribution by *(a)* the United States in fiscal year 1991 and *(b)* the United Kingdom in fiscal year 1990-91 towards construction of facilities announced by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, *Official Report*, 11 January, columns *691-92*, at Royal Air Force Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All costs for the development of the joint analysis centre at RAF Molesworth will be borne by the United States Government. I understand that the request for funding authorisation in United States' fiscal year 1991 amounts to some $17·25 million.

United States Military Construction Projects

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military construction projects in the United Kingdom for support of United States forces funded from the NATO infrastructure fund currently under construction, giving for each project its location, the nature of the facilities to be constructed, the date that construction started and the scheduled date of completion.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to publish information of this kind.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States military construction projects in the United Kingdom for which funding approval was given in fiscal year 1990, giving for each project its location, the nature of the facilities to be constructed and the scheduled dates for the start and completion of the construction.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the US authorities have received US congressional funding approval for fiscal year 1990 for the following military construction projects in the United Kingdom. The detailed start and completion dates for these projects are a matter for the US authorities, although it should be noted that Her Majesty's Government have not yet given approval for all these projects to be carried out.

RAF Alconbury
- Conventional Munitions Shop

RAF Barford St. John
- Physical Security

RAF Bentwaters
- Add/Alter Fire Station
- Alter Munitions Storage
- Add/Alter Flight Simulator Facility

RAF Christmas Common
- Site Security

RAF Edzell
- Operations Building Annex

RAF Fairford
- Digital European Backbone Facility

RAF Macrihanish
- Operations Facility

RAF Mildenhall
- Upgrade Sewage Treatment Plant

RAF Upper Heyford
- Alter Munitions Storage

Bovingdon
- Site security

Department of Defense Dependants Schools
- Bicester Elementary School
- Upwood Elementary School

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the United States military construction

projects in the United Kingdom for which funding approval is being sought for the United States fiscal years 1991 and 1992, giving for each project its location, the nature of the facilities to be constructed and the scheduled dates for the start and completion of the construction;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), *Official Report*, 6 February, columns *603-4*, whether he has now been informed by his United States counterpart of any United States military construction projects additional to those listed in that answer for which funding is being sought for the fiscal year 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My answer to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 6 February (columns *603-4*) listed projects in the United Kingdom for which the United States Air Force had sought funding in fiscal year 1991. In addition, funding approval is being sought for a Department of Defense dependants' school at Harrogate, and by the United States Navy for a dental clinic at RAF Edzell and for a fleet hospital facility at RAF Lanark. I understand that the United States authorities have not yet sought funding approval for military construction projects for their fiscal year 1992.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future use of RAF Greenham Common by United States forces including details of what functions will be continued on the base, how many personnel will remain on base, and whether there will be any regular flying activity from the base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 6 February, columns *591-92*. I understand that current United States plans are for around 400 personnel to be retained at the station.

RAF Wethersfield

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future use of RAF Wethersfield by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decisions have yet been taken concerning the future of RAF Wethersfield after it is handed back to the Ministry of Defence in June 1991.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of the United States forces units or equipment currently based at RAF Wethersfield will be moved to other locations within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand from the United States authorities that about a quarter of the 400 personnel of the 819 civil engineering squadron will remain in the United Kingdom, dispersed among the United States' main operating bases. The squadron's equipment will remain in the United Kingdom in storage.

Radiation

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the upper quartile range of maximum radiation doses rates sustained by workers at *(a)* the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston, *(b)* Plymouth, Devonport and *(c)* Rosyth for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures requested are given in tables 1 and 2, based on the interpretation of upper quartile as the range of doses to which the most highly exposed 25 per cent. of the workers are subjected. The lowest dose of the upper quartile range cannot be readily identified for the royal dockyards (table 1) due to the way the figures are compiled. Both for AWE and the royal dockyards, however, the vast majority of exposures are much less than 15mSv.

Table 1
Uppermost Quartile Data for Exposures to External Irradiation for the Royal Dockyards, including data for workers of the Contractors (Devonport Management Ltd. and Babcock Thorn) after 1987

Year	Dose Range (mSv)
1985	<15 - 50
1986	<15 - 40
1987	<15 - 55
1988	<15 - 30
1989	<15 - 50

Table 2
AWE Uppermost Quartile Data for Exposures to External Irradiation

Year	Dose Range (mSv)
1984	0·7 - 15
1985	0·8 - 20
1986	0·8 - 15
1987	0·7 - 15
1988	0·8 - 10

Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of notified accidents at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Neubert: The numbers of abnormal occurrences notified by Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston to regulatory and environmental authorities, under the criteria in force at the time, for each of the past five years are:

	Number
1985	3
1986	26
1987	46
1988	47
1989	46

The apparent increase between 1985 and 1987 was a result of changed reporting arrangements and criteria.

Almost all these occurrences were industrial injuries or other events unconnected with radioactive substances. None involved exposure to radiation above one thousandth of a milliSeivert.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons the Royal Air Force will not introduce a computerised logging system for military low-flying aircraft sorties before 1992 at the earliest.

Mr. Neubert: The intention to introduce a computerised notification and warning system in the United

Kingdom low-flying system was announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 20 October 1988, at column *1101*. It is planned to bring the system into use in 1992. This is a complex system and it will take this period to develop the appropriate software and instal terminals in all low-flying units.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will establish an exclusion zone of a radius of 20 miles around the sites of major open air festivals in low-flying training areas.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken by his Department to brief other NATO aircrew of the need to avoid disturbance to major open air festivals in low-flying areas.

Mr. Neubert: Relevant notices to airmen (NOTAMs) are brought to the attention of all military aircrews planning low-flying sorties in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the aerodrome at Netherthorpe lies within a military low-flying transit area.

Mr. Neubert: Yes.

Nerve Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many tonnes of nerve gas are stockpiled on United Kingdom soil by NATO forces; and if he will show in his answer the amount for each member country.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by location, the sites of NATO nerve gas stockpiles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is none.

Royal Navy (Vessel Location)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to publish regular updates of the global location of *(a)* Royal Navy surface ships, *(b)* Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships, *(c)* Royal Navy diesel-powered submarines and *(d)* Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Military Personnel (Radiation)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he will review the relevance to his Department of the research conducted by Professor Martin Gardner for the Medical Research Council into the correlation between childhood leukaemia and fathers working at Sellafield; and whether he will commission a report into radiation and submariners by Professor Gardner;

(2) if he will commission research into the health of submariners with *(a)* abnormalities in the offspring of submariners working on nuclear submarines and *(b)* abnormalities in the offspring of groups regularly working in closest proximity to the nuclear reactors of submarines;

(3) what research studies have been undertaken into the health of the offspring of and individuals *(a)* working with nuclear materials in the armed forces and *(b)* working in the nuclear defence industry;

(4) whether he will commission studies into abnormalities in the offspring of those working around *(a)* military nuclear power stations, *(b)* sites involved in the manufacture of nuclear reactors, *(c)* sites involved in the manufacture of nuclear arms, *(d)* sites where military nuclear waste is stored, *(e)* nuclear weapons storage facilities and *(f)* naval dockyards working with nuclear material.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 28 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *246*.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to re-evaluate the current programme of seeking Z-berths for reserve use by nuclear submarines in the light of the Gardner report on radiation risks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make it his policy to charge facility fees when journalists or radio or television crews are carried in search and rescue helicopters engaged in flying operations;

(2) if he will make it his policy to recover landing charges incurred by search and rescue helicopters when these are caused by the picking up and setting down of journalists or radio or television crews.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is already the policy to charge for the costs of providing facilities for journalists and radio or television crews, except where the provision of the facilities is judged to be in the interests of the Department, when no charge is made. Each case will continue to be judged on its merits.

Anti-tank Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards United Kingdom participation in the Franco-German PAH-2 anti-tank helicopter programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The PAH-2 Tiger is one of several options being studied to replace the Army's anti-armour helicopters.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many internal auditors are employed in his Department and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Neubert: There are 113 internal auditors employed in MOD at an annual cost of £2·07 million. In 1989 736 internal audit reports were produced. None was drawn to the attention of a Minister in the Department. No internal audit work in MOD is subcontracted to private firms.

Ballistic Missiles (Iraq)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will initiate an investigation into the role of the British-registered firm Matrix Churchill in supplying consultancy services to Iraq for the development of ballistic missile technology.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to comment on specific defence export cases.

Harrier GR5

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what modifications were carried out to the Harrier GR5 ejector seat after October 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following the crash of Harrier GR5 ZD325 a total of 21 modifications were identified as being necessary to the ejection seat. Five of these were declared mandatory before flying could recommence: two to the seat itself, two to the emergency oxygen selector valve and the fifth to remove a cockpit wander lamp thought to be a potential loose object hazard. All have been carried out. Three further modifications to the oxygen system mounted on the seat were declared mandatory before aircraft could fly at heights above 10,000 ft and are in the process of being embodied. Aircraft not yet modified are required to fly below 10,000 ft. The remaining modifications are not safety critical and are being made on an opportunity basis.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of 26 February, *Official Report*, column 73, he will place a transcript of the conversation between his officials and General Sir Peter Leng of 17 February, in the Library.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Coastal Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by his Ministry to ensure co-ordination in coastal protection work between Departments, along the lines of the steps being taken by the standing conference on the problems associated with the coastline to co-ordinate coastal protection works between neighbouring local authorities on the south coast.

Mr. Maclean: The Departments involved in policy matters relating to coastal defence work are my Department in England and the respective territorial Departments.

It is recognised that there are other associated issues such as those relating to nature conservation, tourism, aggregate extraction and so on. Many of these matters will be addressed in submissions of proposed coast protection work or through the existing system of consultation. In addition, any such issues which might have more general implications for the defence of the coastline are kept under regular review.

It is encouraging that groups of authorities concerned with both coast protection and sea defence are discussing these matters together. Such groups, and the standing conference is a good example, have the advantage of a wider perspective of the coastal environment than is possible for the individual authorities. My regional engineers also have a co-ordinating role when discussing potential coast protection and sea defence schemes with the authorities and my Department is grant-aiding research studies of coastal processes with a view to identifying appropriate solutions for defence of stretches of the coastline.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the sources of grant aid available from his Ministry for work on coastal protection and sea defences including details of the amounts to be paid during 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Maclean: The Department makes available grant aid for the construction of capital works of coast protection and sea defence. In 1989-90 the total grant available for coastal protection and sea defence work is £28 million. In 1990-91 the total available is expected to be over £33 million.

Further increases in grant are planned for 1991-92 and 1992-93. The needs of authorities undertaking coast protection and sea defence works are kept regularly under review.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to streamline the procedures in respect of the statutory consultations required under the Coast Protection Act 1949 for grant-aiding coast protection work and sea defences.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Coast Protection (Notices) Regulations 1950, a coast protection authority must publish notice of proposed coast protection schemes and serve like notice on interested parties such as the county council, fisheries organisations and neighbouring coast protection authorities. In addition, my Department consults a small number of other bodies, such as the Nature Conservancy Council. Such representations or objections as may be made are already handled as quickly as possible, but our procedures are nevertheless under continuous review.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, 26 February, *Official Report*, column 71, if he will identify the slaughterhouses and markets at which bovine spongiform encephalopathy-suspect cattle were identified; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Maclean: It has been the Ministry's long-established practice not to disclose details of premises from which notifiable diseases have been reported.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the welfare of animals during transit.

Mr Maclean: It is most important that people involved in transporting animals plan journeys properly and conduct them with full consideration for the living creatures in their care.

There is comprehensive legislation covering the welfare of animals in transit to, from and within this country. Responsibility for enforcement lies with county and metropolitan local authorities. The Ministry is also prepared to prosecute offenders and this was done successfully over the tragic deaths of beagles being exported to Sweden. Specific statutory controls ensure that all food animals leave these shores rested, fed and watered and inspected for fitness to travel at approved export lairages. Compliance with existing EC directives outside our jurisdiction is of course a matter for other member states. We are currently seeking the best possible welfare safeguards during negotiations on proposals for new Community rules on the protection of animals during transport.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Brussels Agriculture Council held on 5-6 March.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

The Council completed its first consideration of the 1990 farm price proposals. Discussion will resume at the next meeting beginning on 26 March, when the Presidency is expected to put forward a compromise proposal.

Liquid Egg

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to whether salmonella enteritidis PT4 can multiply in bulk liquid egg in a frozen state.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not available on whether salmonella enteritidis PT4 specifically is able to multiply in bulk liquid egg in the frozen state. It is expected to behave like most bacteria, which are unable to multiply at temperatures below 0 deg C.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many internal auditors are employed in his Ministry and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Curry: Currently 36½ staff are employed at a direct cost in 1989-90 of £889,000. One hundred and twenty-four reports were issued in 1989. All audit reports are summarised in a bimonthly report I receive. During 1989 the audit of staff restaurants was contracted out at a cost of £8,000.

Farm Employees

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers, partners, directors and farm workers were employed in each county in England in *(a)* June and *(b)* December 1989.

Mr. Maclean: County results from the June 1989 agricultural census have recently become available and are shown in the table. County figures are not available from the December agricultural sample surveys.

Number of farmers and workers employed in agriculture June 1989

County by standard statistical region	*Farmers, partners and directors*							*All workers (excluding salaried managers)*			*Salaried managers*
	Whole-time			*Part-time*			*Total farmers, partners and directors*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	
	Principal farmers and partners	*Other partners and directors*	*Total*	*Principal farmers and partners*	*Other partners and directors*	*Total*					
Cleveland	301	108	409	82	60	142	551	418	105	523	25
Cumbria	4,428	1,575	6,003	1,015	688	1,703	7,706	4,012	654	4,666	79
Durham	1,505	499	2,004	394	271	665	2,669	1,535	448	1,983	23
Tyne and Wear	1,635	612	2,247	384	335	719	2,966	2,554	475	3,029	78
Northumberland	185	54	239	43	33	76	315	301	114	415	10
Northern Region	8,054	2,848	10,902	1,918	1,387	3,305	14,207	8,820	1,796	10,616	215
Humberside	2,358	1,101	3,459	671	480	1,151	4,610	4,839	1,616	6,455	236
North Yorkshire	5,914	2,149	8,063	1,519	1,115	2,634	10,697	7,684	2,987	10,671	282
South Yorkshire	904	329	1,233	343	212	555	1,788	1,199	417	1,616	30
West Yorkshire	1,639	511	2,150	1,048	413	1,461	3,611	2,137	704	2,841	74
Yorks and Humber Region	10,815	4,090	14,905	3,581	2,220	5,801	20,706	15,859	5,724	21,583	622
Derbyshire	2,344	744	3,088	799	501	1,300	4,388	2,381	728	3,109	50
Leicestershire	1,712	626	2,338	565	351	916	3,254	2,479	859	3,338	100
Lincolnshire	3,856	1,513	5,369	1,192	968	2,160	7,529	8,877	4,265	13,142	431
Northampton	1,177	426	1,603	455	331	786	2,389	1,945	476	2,421	108
Nottingham	1,266	507	1,773	354	295	649	2,422	2,365	925	3,290	113
East Midlands Region	10,355	3,816	14,171	3,365	2,446	5,811	19,982	18,047	7,253	25,300	802
Cambridgeshire	2,343	870	3,213	717	525	1,242	4,455	4,543	2,665	7,208	237
Norfolk	3,039	1,036	4,075	1,181	698	1,879	5,954	8,070	4,760	12,830	393

County by standard statistical region	Farmers, partners and directors: Whole-time: Principal farmers and partners	Whole-time: Other partners and directors	Whole-time: Total	Part-time: Principal farmers and partners	Part-time: Other partners and directors	Part-time: Total	Total farmers, partners and directors	All workers (excluding salaried managers): Male	Female	Total	Salaried managers
Suffolk	2,129	762	2,891	811	557	1,368	4,259	5,100	2,396	7,496	306
East Anglia Region	7,511	2,668	10,179	2,709	1,780	4,489	14,668	17,713	9,821	27,534	936
Bedfordshire	778	303	1,081	261	162	423	1,504	1,425	636	2,061	79
Berkshire	423	124	547	247	114	361	908	1,160	373	1,533	112
Buckinghamshire	1,035	316	1,351	546	255	801	2,152	1,836	635	2,471	133
East Sussex	1,137	307	1,444	715	327	1,042	2,486	2,092	1,254	3,346	123
Essex	2,088	821	2,909	780	660	1,440	4,349	4,493	2,516	7,009	276
Greater London	248	102	350	109	56	165	515	673	489	1,162	37
Hampshire	1,584	520	2,104	876	418	1,294	3,398	4,320	2,398	6,718	362
Hertfordshire	711	268	979	290	185	475	1,454	1,548	503	2,051	107
Isle of Wight	312	80	392	123	82	205	597	582	290	872	26
Kent	2,220	665	2,885	1,268	732	2,000	4,885	6,984	7,807	14,791	373
Oxfordshire	1,205	391	1,596	513	300	813	2,409	2,593	751	3,344	186
Surrey	800	183	983	582	235	817	1,800	2,177	1,501	3,678	189
West Sussex	1,117	341	1,458	624	320	944	2,402	3,602	2,721	6,323	292
South Eastern Region	13,658	4,421	18,079	6,934	3,846	10,780	28,859	33,485	21,874	55,359	2,295
Avon	1,228	332	1,560	456	229	685	2,245	1,773	1,348	3,121	102
Cornwall and Scilly	4,326	1,116	5,442	1,740	784	2,524	7,966	4,120	1,346	5,466	62
Devon	7,088	1,761	8,849	2,180	1,148	3,328	12,177	7,139	1,726	8,865	174
Dorset	1,747	523	2,270	760	424	1,184	3,454	3,154	815	3,969	157
Gloucester	1,836	497	2,333	861	448	1,309	3,642	2,972	1,263	4,235	161
Somerset	3,537	991	4,528	1,343	696	2,039	6,567	4,868	1,563	6,431	148
Wiltshire	1,744	554	2,298	664	402	1,066	3,364	3,688	864	4,552	254
South Western Region	21,506	5,774	27,280	8,004	4,131	12,135	39,415	27,714	8,925	36,639	1,058
Hereford and Worcester	4,034	1,206	5,240	1,665	936	2,601	7,841	6,199	3,901	10,100	257
Salop	3,221	984	4,205	966	611	1,577	5,782	4,340	1,395	5,735	130
Staffordshire	2,777	857	3,634	1,006	529	1,535	5,169	3,676	1,001	4,677	82
Warwickshire	1,424	488	1,912	564	315	879	2,791	2,195	919	3,114	122
West Midlands	276	80	356	111	80	191	547	443	366	809	17
West Midlands Region	11,732	3,615	15,347	4,312	2,471	6,783	22,130	16,853	7,582	24,435	608
Cheshire	2,769	878	3,647	867	466	1,353	5,000	3,964	932	4,896	163
Greater Manchester	884	281	1,165	377	223	600	1,765	1,026	469	1,495	24
Lancashire	3,659	1,327	4,986	1,113	686	1,799	6,785	4,664	2,013	6,677	160
Merseyside	332	105	437	94	74	168	605	571	256	827	15
North West Region	7,644	2,591	10,235	2,451	1,469	3,920	14,155	10,225	3,670	13,895	362
England	91,275	29,823	121,098	33,274	19,750	53,024	174,122	148,716	66,645	215,361	6,898

Source: June Census 1989

Note: Figures exclude minor holdings not included in June Census.

ADAS

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been employed in the ADAS research and development service for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The research and development service of ADAS was established in 1987. The number of staff, including industrials and adminstrative support, employed in the research and development service for each year since then at the dates indicated was as follows:

	Number
1 March 1987	987·0
1 March 1988	995·0
1 March 1989	926·5
1 March 1990	798·0

Each individual employed for fewer than conditioned hours (37 hours per week outside London) has been counted as 0·5 of a post in the figures.

Laboratories

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the locations of his food science laboratories, and give the number of people employed in each laboratory in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: During the past 10 years the food science laboratory has occupied premises at Romney street, London, and two locations in Norwich (Colney lane and Queen street); these have been operated as a single scientific laboratory and information about staff numbers on each site is not available in the form requested.

The total number of staff employed in each year is given in the table and excludes administration support staff:

Year	Numbers Employed at[1] Food Science Laboratory
1980-81	45
1981-82	48
1982-83	46
1983-84	52
1984-85	49
1985-86	49
1986-87	48
1987-88	50
1988-89	55
1989-90	59

[1]excludes administrative staff.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of *(a)* veterinary laboratories, *(b)* ADAS farm, countryside science laboratories, excluding facilities for milk testing etc., *(c)* ADAS research and development science laboratories, *(d)* fisheries laboratories and *(e)* food science laboratories, which are currently operating; what are his estimates for the number operating in 1990 and 1991 in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On present assumptions, the number of laboratory sites will be as follows at the end of the current financial year and of 1990-91 and 1991-92 respectively:

	Financial year ending 31 March 1990	1991	1992
(a) Veterinary Laboratories (including the Central Veterinary Laboratory, outstations and Veterinary Investigation Centres)	22	21	21

On 1 August 1990 the cattle-breeding centre at Shinfield will be closed as already announced. From 1 April 1990 the central veterinary laboratory, including its outstation at Lasswade, will become an executive agency. A review of the structure of the veterinary investigation service to look for ways of improving the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the services was announced on 19 October 1989. I have yet to consider the report.

	1990	1991	1992
(b) ADAS—Farm and Countryside Service (excluding minor facilities for milk testing, testing etc)	9	7	7

As announced on 21 March 1989 regional laboratories are being rationalised in order to improve cost-effectiveness.

(c) ADAS—Research and Development Services	6	6	6

The six individual laboratory sites are managed as a single central science laboratory pending collocation expected in 1993.

(d) Fisheries Laboratories	6	6	6

Of the above, five sites form the directorate of fisheries research, while the sixth is Torry research station, Aberdeen.

(e) Food Science Laboratories	1	1	1

The food science laboratory, formerly on three sites, was collocated at one site in Norwich from 5 February 1990.

I am satisfied that the restructuring and collocation of the Ministry's laboratories already carried out or in prospect has maintained and will maintain the necessary facilities for R and D and analytical work in support of policy objectives.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of man hours of people employed in *(a)* the central veterinary laboratory and *(b)* the state veterinary service on (i) bovine spongiform encephalopathy, (ii) salmonella, (iii) listeria and (iv) campylobacter on 1 October 1988, 1 April 1989, 1 October 1989 and 1 March 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The number of hours of the people employed by the SVS (including the VIS) and the CVL (scientific staff) on BSE and zoonoses for the periods stated are as follows:

	SVS BSE	CVL BSE	SVS Zoonoses	CVL Zoonoses
1 April 1988 to 30 September 1988	6,746	3,747	15,318	8,229
1 October 1988 to 31 March 1989	18,292	6,405	28,207	9,254
1 April 1989 to 30 September 1989	34,575	9,893	37,186	9,266
1 October 1989 to 1 February 1990 (4 months)	28,287	7,877	32,479	8,998

Notes:
1. The zoonoses figures do not include sampling of imported proteins.
2. The figures do not include work carried out in VI centres on a chargeable basis for bacteriological monitoring of salmonella in poultry, or the diagnosis of disease caused by these other organisms on material submitted by veterinary surgeons.
3. Separate figures for salmonella, listeria and campylobacter are not available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the numbers employed in the central veterinary laboratory, giving a separate figure for the number of scientists, for each year since 1979, and including the current figure.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

	Permanent Staff in Post in the CVL	Scientific Staff
1990	503	272
1989	536	285
1988	534	287
1987	535	291
1986	568	307
1985	585	313
1984	584	306
1983	592	306
1982	620	311
1981	647	327
1980	667	327
1979	659	321

Notes:

Taken from January figures for each year in respect of the central veterinary laboratory at Weybridge; the separate laboratories of the Reading cattle breeding centre and Lasswade (Scotland) are excluded.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the roles of and the current relationship between the state veterinary service and the central veterinary laboratory; and how he expects this to change in the future.

Mr. Maclean: The objectives of the state veterinary service are published in "Animal Health 1988, The Report of the Chief Veterinary Officer", (page 2). The central veterinary laboratory is currently part of the state veterinary service and contributes to meeting these objectives by providing specialised diagnostic, research, advisory services and products.

On 2 April the central veterinary laboratory will become an executive agency within MAFF. It will continue to deliver those services required by the state veterinary service in pursuit of its objectives on a more formalised contractual basis.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STATE VETERINARY SERVICE

The prevention control of animal diseases

To prevent the importation of animal diseases, particularly exotic diseases, through national and EC measures. To control and/or eradicate all notifiable diseases. To assist the industry in the control of non-notifiable diseases.

Farm animal welfare

To encourage high standards of animal welfare on farms, during transport, at markets, in abattoirs and, as far as possible, on export. To explain government policies on farm animal welfare. To provide support for the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) and act as appropriate on its recommendations.

Livestock protection

To improve the health status and genetic quality of farm livestock by the establishment of voluntary disease control schemes and regulatory control over artificial insemination and embryo transplant. To support the export trade by the establishment of herds and flocks of known health status.

Veterinary medicines

To ensure the safety, quality and efficacy of all veterinary medicines produced, imported, sold and supplied in the United Kingdom. To encourage the proper use of medicines.

Veterinary public health and export promotion

To provide safeguards for public health in the production and import of meat. To facilitate exports of live animals, meat and other animal products by doing everything possible to ensure that the animal health and public health requirements of importing countries are met.

To meet these objectives the veterinary service consists of a regulatory force (the Veterinary Field Service), a surveillance network (the Veterinary Investigation Service), and a research and development facility (the Central Veterinary Laboratories).

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to co-locate his three food science laboratories; where the new food science laboratory will be located; and how many scientists he will employ there.

Mr. Maclean: New accommodation for the food science laboratory has recently been completed in Colney lane, Norwich and staff from the three existing sites were transferred to the new building on 5 February 1990. A total of 83 laboratory posts are approved for 1990-91 and of these 63 will be for qualified scientists.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the countries in which the irradiation of poultry meat is legal.

Mr. Maclean: According to information provided by the international consultative group on food irradiation, the following countries have approved the process for the treatment of poultry meat:

Bangladesh
Brazil
Chile
France
Hungary
Israel
Netherlands
South Africa
Sierrean Arab Republic
Thailand
Taiwan.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the countries in which irradiation is used as a method of preservation of poultry meat.

Mr. Maclean: Of the countries submitting returns for the information of the international consultative group on food irradiation, irradiation of poultry meat has been reported from France and the Netherlands.

ENVIRONMENT

Populations

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available population figures for each of the district council areas in Essex, Surrey, Kent, Hampshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Durham.

Mr. Chope: The latest available information on resident population for the areas requested is given in the table. It is that estimated by the registrar-general as at 30 June 1988. Information on adult population calculated in accordance with the population report (England) was placed in the Library on 11 January.

Estimated resident population at 30 June 1988

	Thousands
Essex	
Basildon	157·5
Braintree	117·2
Brentwood	70·0
Castle Point	85·5
Chelmsford	151·7
Colchester	150·2
Epping Forest	111·8
Harlow	72·0
Maldon	53·6
Rochford	74·4
Southend-on-Sea	165·4
Tendring	129·6
Thurrock	124·4
Uttlesford	66·1
Surrey	
Elmbridge	107·1
Epsom and Ewell	67·5
Guildford	123·2
Mole Valley	76·2
Reigate and Banstead	113·6

	Thousands
Runnymede	71·3
Spelthorne	85·8
Surrey Heath	83·6
Tandridge	75·6
Waverley	109·7
Woking	86·1
Kent	
Ashford	95·1
Canterbury	131·9
Dartford	78·4
Dover	106·3
Gillingham	95·3
Gravesham	90·2
Maidstone	136·0
Rochester-upon-Medway	146·6
Sevenoaks	107·3
Shepway	87·6
Swale	115·3
Thanet	129·7
Tonbridge and Malling	101·2
Tunbridge Wells	99·3
Hampshire	
Basingstoke and Deane	139·7
East Hampshire	103·5
Eastleigh	101·0
Fareham	100·3
Gosport	76·9
Hart	85·9
Havant	117·5
New Forest	163·3
Portsmouth	183·8
Rushmoor	77·0
Southampton	196·7
Test Valley	102·3
Winchester	96·0
Cheshire	
Chester	117·1
Congleton	86·6
Crewe and Nantwich	96·8
Ellesmere Port and Neston	79·7
Halton	124·0
Macclesfield	152·3
Vale Royal	113·3
Warrington	186·0
Lancashire	
Blackburn	134·4
Blackpool	143·8
Burnley	85·4
Chorley	96·7
Fylde	73·2
Hyndburn	78·9
Lancaster	131·1
Pendle	84·4
Preston	128·1
Ribble Valley	52·8
Rossendale	64·6
South Ribble	100·2
West Lancashire	105·4
Wyre	103·0
Durham	
Chester-le-Street	53·1
Darlington	99·7
Derwentside	85·9
Durham	85·8
Easington	95·0
Sedgefield	88·4
Teesdale	24·9
Wear Valley	64·1

Source: OPCS Monitor PP1 89/1 issued 10 August 1989.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many P and T staff the Property Services Agency plans to have in *(a)* projects, *(b)* special services and *(c)* international and building management on 1 April.

Mr. Chope: Property Services Agency plans to have the following distribution of P and T non-industrial staff in its businesses on 1 April:

	Number
Projects	1,305
Building management	5,200
Specialist services	352
Property Services Agency International	425
TOTAL	7,282

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff from grade 5 to executive officer and support staff the Property Services Agency plans to have in *(a)* projects, *(b)* special services and *(c)* international and building management on 1 April.

Mr. Chope: Property Services Agency plans to have the following distribution of staff in its businesses on 1 April:

	Grade 5 to executive officer	*Support staff*
Projects	141	314
Building management	[1]3,500	—
Specialist services	26	85
Property Services Agency International	77	36

[1] Includes "Support" staff.

Community Charge

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in East Sussex, on the information currently available to him, are planning budgets which will lead to community charge levels above those indicated in his Department's projections.

Mr. Chope: The Department has received returns from East Sussex county council and Wealden borough council. Both authorities are planning budgets above the levels assumed in the settlement.

Councillors

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the regulation he is to bring forward consequent on part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will include provision to ensure that councillors who are employees of companies that will be deemed to be controlled by the local authority in which they are a member may see out their term of office.

Mr. David Hunt: The disqualification of employees of companies under the control of a single local authority arises directly from paragraph 21 of schedule 11 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989: an order under part V of the Act could not modify this provision.

Tenants' Choice

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the tenants' choice promotion campaign starts.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 2 March 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) *Official Report*, Volume 168, column *388*.

Carers

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to take steps to ensure that volunteer care workers providing care for a disabled person who are not employed by a charitable body but by an individual disabled person are not liable to pay the community charge.

Mr. Chope: The current exemption does not require the care worker to be employed by a charitable body. An individual may be exempt if he or she is employed by the person receiving care, provided that he or she has been introduced to that person by a body established for charitable purposes, receives a wage or salary of less than £25 a week, is required to work for at least 24 hours a week and is ordinarily resident in premises provided by or on behalf of the employer for the better performance of his or her duties.

Red list Substances

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many substances appear on the red list as drawn up by each country within the European Community; if he has any plans to increase the number of chemicals on the red list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The red list is a United Kingdom initiative: a list of chemicals which are particularly dangerous to the aquatic environment. Not all other Community countries have such lists and I do not have details of those which do exist.

The Commission of the European Communities has recently proposed to the Council that most of the substances on the red list which have not already been dealt with as list I substances should receive priority treatment for the setting of limit values and quality objectives. A list of agreed hazardous substances, which includes many of the red list substances, is likely to be agreed at the North sea conference this week.

The Department is starting to assess new candidates for the red list, but it is unlikely that any will be given red list status before the end of next year.

Carbon Canister Technology

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government will support the proposals contained in the European Community draft directive COM (89) 662 to reduce evaporative emissions from cars by the fitting of carbon canister technology; whether the Government will support the further "stage 1" controls; and what the likely costs of such measures will be.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 March 1990]*: I have been asked to reply.

I am preparing an explanatory memorandum on the COM (89) 662 proposals (Council document No. 4704/90). It will be submitted to the House shortly. The Commission has yet to make proposals concerning stage 1 controls on evaporative emissions in the petrol distribution network from refinery to retail forecourt.

Street Lighting

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to issue local authorities with guidelines regarding street lighting standards.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: I have been asked to reply.

No. Local authorities already have such guidelines produced by the British Standards Institution with the participation of the Department and local authorities. A copy of the current edition, BS 5489, is in the Library.

Waste Control Policy

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implication for waste control policy of European Community draft directive 88/C295/03.

Mr. Trippier: The Department of the Environment submitted an explanatory memorandum to Parliament on 25 October 1988 setting out the Government's view on the implications of the Commission's proposal for revision of the 1975 directive on waste (88/C295/03) and submitted a further explanatory memorandum on 10 January 1990 on the Commission's amended proposal. The Government also expressed their view in the debate held in the First Standing Committee on European Committee Documents on 20 July 1989 (*Official Report, First Standing Committee on European Community Document*, 20 July 1989).

Halon Emissions

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to eliminate atmospheric emissions of *(a)* halon 1211, *(b)* halon 1301 and *(c)* halon 2402; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: In the negotiations to revise the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer we are seeking international agreement to phase out these chemicals by 2005.

House Conditions

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of houses identified in 1971, 1976, 1981 and 1986 by the English house conditions survey as *(a)* being unfit for human habitation, *(b)* lacking basic amenities and *(c)* being in a state of serious disrepair.

Mr. Chope: The numbers are as follows:

	1971	1976	1981	1986
Unfit dwellings	1,216,000	1,162,000	1,116,000	1,053,000
Dwellings lacking basic amenities	2,815,000	1,531,000	863,000	543,000
Dwellings in serious disrepair	1,104,000	1,097,000	1,178,000	1,113,000

Rateable Values

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list by location, and by year for the last 10 years, the rateable values of property that have been reduced, because the letting value has been affected due to the risk of nuclear contamination;

(2) if he will list by location, and by year for the last 10 years, the rateable value appeals of property that have been heard, due to the claim that the letting value has been affected due to the risk of nuclear contamination.

Mr. Chope: No information is held centrally from which to establish whether there have been any such reductions or appeals.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the community charge increase over rates for the village of Eriswell; what contribution the United States air force personnel will be required to contribute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I cannot say what the difference between the community charge and the rates paid by the residents of the village of Eriswell will be. It depends on the level of the community charge, which Forest Heath district council has yet to set, and on the present rateable value of each home. My Department does not have information on individual rateable values. United States air force personnel are exempt from the community charge and will make no contribution. Local authorities are compensated for the loss of income arising from these and any other exemptions by the operation of the revenue support grant system. They receive enough grant to enable them to spend at the level of the standard spending assessment and set a charge of £278, before transitional arrangements, on the assumption that it is collected only from those who are subject to the charge.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why an owner of an hotel is eligible for phased transitional relief on the original building but not on any extensions carried out;

(2) what arrangements his Department is making to make phased transitional relief on commercial rating for the hotel and guesthouse trade available to new owners after 1 April.

Mr. Chope: Transitional relief is intended to phase in the new business rate to protect existing ratepayers from large overnight increases in their rate bills. A person who extends his property, or takes on a different property, on or after 1 April 1990, will know what his liability will be before doing so. Transitional relief could be made available in these circumstances only by reducing the limits on rate reductions at the expense of many businesses in northern England, including those in south Yorkshire, where average rate bills would fall by 26·7 per cent. in 1990-91 without transition.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reason the scaling factor for children's personal social services in table C of the calculations for Humberside's standard spending assessment is specified to 14 decimal places; what the figure represents; and what the effect of this scaling factor is on the standard spending assessment for Grimsby.

Mr. Chope: The scaling factor for children's personal social services ensures that the sum of the SSA elements for individual authorities is equal to the total of SSA available for children's social services for England of £1,275·1 million in 1990-91.

It is specified to 14 decimal places to ensure that this exact total is achieved. It has no effect on the standard spending assessment for Grimsby since Grimsby, as a non-metropolitan district, is not responsible for social services.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how, with reference to paragraph 3.29 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), poll tax payers and council officials may check the validity of the figure of £1·37.

Mr. Chope: The figure referred to in paragraph 3.29 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report was arrived at after full consultation with local authority representatives, and was approved by the House on 18 January. Local authorities are able to check that this figure has been correctly applied to the circumstances of their particular local authority.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how, with reference to paragraph 3.32 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), poll tax payers and council officials may check the validity of the figure of *(a)* £1,928·93 and *(b)* £13·05.

Mr. Chope: The figures referred to in paragraph 3.32 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) were arrived at after full consultation with local authority representatives, and were approved by this House on 18 January. Local authority officials are able to check that the figures have been properly applied to the circumstances of their particular local authority.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what allowance was made in the standard spending assessment of each English local authority for the use of reserves; and what information he has on the actual figure announced by each authority.

Mr. Chope: The standard spending assessment for an authority is intended to represent the amount of revenue expenditure which it would be appropriate for the authority to incur to provide a standard level of service consistent with the view of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment of the amount of revenue expenditure which it would be appropriate for all local authorities to incur. We considered that it was not

appropriate to make any allowance in SSAs for reserves. I have no firm information on the use of reserves announced by each authority.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate was made of the number of second homes in each local authority area in fixing the standard spending assessment for that area; and what is the ratio of each estimate to the total population or the poll tax register.

Mr. Chope: The number of second homes is not an indicator used in calculating standard spending assessments. I do not have any estimate of the number of second homes in each local authority area.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment with reference to paragraph 3.29 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), what effect the choice of the figure of *(a)* £7·11 and *(b)* £1·37 has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Humberside.

Mr. Chope: The figure of £7·11 in paragraph 3.29 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) when applied to the resident population of Humberside contributes £9 per relevant adult to Humberside's SSA. The figure of £1·37 when applied to the ward-weighted density for Humberside accounts for £5 per relevant adult of the SSA for Humberside.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment with reference to paragraph 3.32 of his Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England), what effect the choice of the figure of *(a)* £1,928·93 and *(b)* £13·05 has on the standard spending assessment arrived at for Humberside.

Mr. Chope: The figures referred to in paragraph 3.32 of the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) contribute £28 and £2 per relevant adult, respectively, to the SSA for Humberside.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *474*, concerning the amount of rates and poll tax in inner and outer London, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the information placed in the Library on 11 January.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 23 February, *Official Report*, Vol. 167, column *929*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his written reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *222*, concerning the amount of poll tax payable in 1990-91 per adult for each region etc., whether in each case the proposed reduction or increase in the local tax and ratepayer's contribution to local expenditure assumes an increase or decrease in the per adult contribution made by central Government; and whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the per adult figures for the central Government contribution in each case together with figures showing that contribution as a percentage of the local tax and ratepayer's contribution.

Mr. Chope: The Government have not proposed specific increases in local contributions to expenditure in 1990-91. The Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) sets out the basis of distribution of revenue support grant for 1990-91. The Revenue Support Grant Transition Report (England) sets out the adjustments to that basis of distribution and the Special Grant Report specifies two special grants for 1990-91. The distribution of business rates will be in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1988. I have today placed in the Library a table which shows the aggregate of these amounts (known as "external support") for each area, as amounts per adult and as percentages of the average assumed personal community charge or 1989-90 rate bill per adult.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimated public expenditure cost to central Government in 1990-91 of the community charge transitional relief scheme for individuals.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* My latest estimate is that about £350 million of transitional relief will be distributed in 1990-91 and that this will benefit about 7·5 million charge payers. This estimate is consistent with the figures on the distributional effect of the community charge placed in the Library on 15 February.

The figures for later years are £260 million in 1991-92 and £200 million in 1992-93. The total amount of relief over the three years is therefore about £810 million.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer on 28 February, *Official Report*, column *208*, that he is responsible for monitoring all extra costs imposed on local authorities by *(a)* Act of Parliament, *(b)* statutory instruments and *(c)* departmental circulars, he will list by Department the notifications under each of these headings, by quantum, for each of the next three years, of the new costs to be borne by local authorities since the rate support grant quantum was agreed with the Treasury in July 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not yet possible to provide a comprehensive list of all the extra costs that will fall to local authorities in the next three years as many of the new pressures and new savings on local authority expenditure for 1991-92 and future years have not yet been quantified.

We will shortly be entering into discussions with the local authority associations before deciding what would be appropriate for local authorities to spend in 1991-92. These discussions will provide the opportunity to identify new burdens on local authorities across the whole range of local authority functions.

Countryside Premium

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will ask the Countryside Commission to consider extending the countryside premium designed to secure environmental benefits from set-aside land from the counties of eastern England to Hampshire.

Mr. Trippier: The countryside premium scheme was launched last June and initially covers only seven counties in eastern England. Arrangements are in hand for monitoring the effectiveness of the scheme in these

counties. It is too early yet to consider extending the scheme to other areas. The scope of the scheme will be reviewed in the light of the results of monitoring.

Beaches

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the beaches which are designated under the EC directive of 1975 which were not monitored for salmonella and enteriditis in 1989.

Mr. Trippier: On 25 January I announced that a detailed summary of the results of the 1989 survey of United Kingdom bathing waters identified under the European Economic Community bathing water directive would be placed in the Library, *Official Report*, 25 January 1990, column 785. This includes numbers of samples taken for the salmonella and enterovirus parameters and the number of these which failed to meet the directive's mandatory standards, at each bathing water.

Downing Street (Gates)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what alternative opening and closing arrangements are under consideration for the newly erected gates at the entrance of Downing street.

Mr. Chope: None.

Home Ownership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to table 6.2 of the general household survey for 1986, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for each country in 1986 with the relevant base together with an estimate for the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 together with a forecast for 1990.

Mr. Chope: The information from the 1986 and 1987 general household surveys is as follows:

	England *per cent.*	*Wales* *per cent.*	*Scotland* *per cent.*
(a) 1986			
Owner occupied, owned outright	25	36	14
Owner occupied, with mortgage	39	31	28
Rented with job or business	2	3	3
Rented from local authority or New Town	24	21	49
Rented from housing association or co-operative	2	1	2
Rented privately, unfurnished	5	6	3
Rented privately, furnished	2	2	1
	Number	*Number*	*Number*
Base (number of households) = 100 per cent.	8,720	492	973
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
(b) 1987			
Owner occupied, owned outright	24	34	14
Owner occupied, with mortgage	41	29	28
Rented with job or business	2	3	3
Rented from local authority or New Town	23	25	50
Rented from housing association or co-operative	3	2	1
Rented privately, unfurnished	4	6	3
Rented privately, furnished	2	1	1
	Number	*Number*	*Number*
Base (number of households) = 100 per cent.	8,842	518	939

Sample sizes for Wales and Scotland are small and, in those two countries, changes in the percentages between the two years are not statistically significant.

Results are not yet available from more recent surveys and the Department does not make such forecasts.

Mortgages

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the figures in table 5.11 of "Regional Trends 1989" for 1988 and a forecast for 1989, together with figures showing the average dwelling price for mortgages taken out by sitting tenants of local authorities in each year.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is listed in the table:

Average dwelling prices for Building Society borrowers

	1988					*1989*				
	Index of dwelling prices 1985 = 100 1988	*All*	*All excl. Local Authority Sitting Tenants*	*Local Authority Sitting Tenants*	*First Time Buyers*	*Index dwelling prices 1985 = 100 1989*	*All*	*All excl. Local Authority Sitting Tenants*	*Local Authority Sitting Tenants*	*First Time Buyers*
		£	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
United Kingdom	167	49,400	52,200	18,000	35,800	202	54,800	59,700	19,800	39,700
Northern	132	30,200	31,800	12,300	21,700	170	37,400	40,900	11,700	24,400
Yorkshire and Humberside	139	32,700	34,000	13,000	23,800	194	41,800	45,300	14,600	29,500

	Index of dwelling prices 1985 = 100 1988	1988 All	1988 All excl. Local Authority Sitting Tenants	1988 Local Authority Sitting Tenants	1988 First Time Buyers	Index dwelling prices 1985 = 100 1989	1989 All	1989 All excl. Local Authority Sitting Tenants	1989 Local Authority Sitting Tenants	1989 First Time Buyers
		£	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
East Midlands	159	40,500	42,600	14,800	28,700	207	49,400	53,200	18,900	36,600
East Anglia	189	57,300	60,700	20,800	40,700	221	64,600	68,700	26,600	48,500
South East	[1]	74,000	77,900	28,100	56,200	[1]	81,900	87,900	33,400	61,700
Greater London	187	77,700	83,100	28,400	63,100	203	82,400	90,500	33,600	66,800
Rest of South East	187	72,600	75,900	28,000	52,200	216	81,600	86,700	33,300	58,800
South West	181	58,500	61,700	20,800	41,400	219	67,000	71,200	25,300	48,300
West Midlands	167	41,700	44,800	13,800	28,100	219	49,800	55,500	16,900	34,300
North West	137	34,100	35,200	12,100	24,200	184	42,100	44,600	13,600	29,800
England	172	52,000	54,600	19,700	38,000	207	58,500	62,800	22,100	43,000
Wales	142	34,200	36,300	13,100	25,700	193	43,000	48,000	16,200	31,800
Scotland	122	31,500	36,200	12,400	21,700	144	35,400	42,300	12,800	22,600
Northern Ireland	118	29,900	31,000	9,400	24,800	124	30,300	32,800	9,800	24,300

Source:—5 per cent. Sample Survey of Building Society Mortgages at completion stage.
[1] Not Available

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the figures in table 5.13 of "Regional Trends 1989" for 1988 and a forecast for 1989, together with the ratio of mortgages to the private dwelling stock in each year and in 1983.

Mr. Chope: The information is listed in the table. In Great Britain the proportions of owner-occupier households with mortgages in 1983 and 1988 were 58 per cent. and 63 per cent., respectively. Estimates for 1989 are not yet available.

	Numbers of loans[1] ('000's)	Average recorded income £	All Building Society Borrowers Average percentage of price advanced	All Building Society Borrowers Percentage of advances over £30,000	First Time Borrowers Percentage of all loans	First Time Borrowers Average deposit £
(a) 1988						
United Kingdom	1,232	15,700	68	45	47	5,400
Northern	75	12,700	75	18	47	2,600
Yorkshire and Humberside	135	12,500	72	21	47	3,300
East Midlands	91	13,500	68	33	46	4,400
East Anglia	40	15,500	62	58	42	6,800
South East	362	20,700	66	78	47	8,600
Greater London	105	23,500	71	83	60	9,300
Rest of South East	257	19,500	63	76	42	8,200
South West	116	15,600	62	60	40	8,000
West Midlands	104	13,900	68	35	48	4,200
North West	144	13,300	73	23	48	3,200
England	1,067	16,000	67	49	46	5,800
Wales	54	12,500	73	25	51	3,600
Scotland	89	13,900	76	25	53	2,800
Northern Ireland	23	13,000	79	18	63	3,600
(b) 1989						
United Kingdom	866	17,200	67	52	52	6,800
Northern	55	14,100	69	29	47	3,400
Yorkshire and Humberside	95	14,500	69	38	49	4,600
East Midlands	59	15,700	68	52	51	5,500
East Anglia	25	18,600	66	70	53	8,200
South East	224	22,800	66	78	54	11,400
Greater London	69	25,300	72	79	64	12,300
Rest of South East	155	21,700	63	78	49	10,900
South West	65	17,600	63	71	49	9,400
West Midlands	76	15,700	66	50	53	5,600
North West	122	14,900	69	38	50	3,900
England	721	17,700	67	56	51	7,300
Wales	41	14,700	68	40	57	5,800
Scotland	84	15,000	73	31	56	3,700
Northern Ireland	20	13,900	77	18	64	4,400

Source: Five per cent. Sample Survey of Building Society Mortgages at completion stage.
[1] Monthly Survey of Building Society Mortgage approvals and completions.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many potential sites of special scientific interest are awaiting notification or renotification;

(2) if he will list the total number of sites of special scientific interest notified under section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949;

(3) if he will list the total number of sites of special scientific interest notified under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Trippier: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that 4,043 SSSIs were notified to local planning authorities under the 1949 Act. By December 1989 the NCC had renotified 3,251 of these and in addition had identified a further 3,091 new sites, of which 1,853 had been notified under the 1981 Act.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest have been damaged in each of the last five years as a result of operations which were granted planning permission.

Mr. Trippier: Full information on the numbers of SSSIs damaged since April 1984 is set out in the NCC's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list all sites of special scientific interest currently the subject of *(a)* planning applications, *(b)* appeals and *(c)* inquiries;

(2) if he will list those sites of special scientific interest in respect of which planning applications were made but were not objected to by the Nature Conservancy Council;

(3) if he will list those sites of special scientific interest where the Nature Conservancy Council objected to a planning application in 1988-89;

(4) if he will list those sites of special scientific interest which have been notified with existing planning permissions in place.

Mr. Trippier: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial resources are available to local authorities for compensation payments in respect of revocation or discontinuance orders made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Moynihan: Decisions on revocation and discontinuance orders are no different from other local authority decisions which may result in expenditure being incurred. In making any such decision an authority will need to have regard to its available resources and its priorities for expenditure.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to reduce the 40-year period of planning permission granted for mineral and peat extraction which relates to a site of special scientific interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Mineral planning authorities have the power to impose conditions on a planning consent which specify the limit of duration of planning permission for mineral sites. Where they do not specify a time limit, the development must cease not later than 60 years from the date of the permission. Where planning permission was already in existence at the time this provision came into effect, development must cease by the year 2042. Mineral planning authorities which wish to limit existing developments can make orders revoking or modifying the planning permission or requiring the use of land to be discontinued or continued subject to conditions. We have no proposals to alter these provisions.

Peat

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions since 1981 revocations or discontinuance orders have been made in respect of planning permissions granted for the extraction of peat.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth's letters dated 26 June 1989 and 2 January 1990, acknowledged by card on 29 June 1989 and by letter on 18 December 1989, referring to Mr. A. S. Johnson of Rugby.

Mr. Chope: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 5 March.

North Sea Dumping

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that the ministerial declaration made at the second international North sea conference concerning the reduction of inputs of dangerous substances to rivers and estuaries is achieved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have today placed in the Library copies of the United Kingdom North sea action plan which is being presented at the third North sea conference today in The Hague. This document reports considerable progress being made by the Government, the regulatory authorities and industry in ensuring that significant reductions are achieved for those substances which pose the most serious threat to the aquatic environment.

"Action for Cities"

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of spending is planned under the "Action for Cities" initiative for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Spending under the "Action for Cities" initiative is planned to be about £4 billion in 1990-91, compared with just over £3 billion in 1988-89 and just under £3·5 billion in 1989-90. The Government are determined to build on the real progress being made in reviving our inner cities and this increase will help speed the pace of renewal still further. A breakdown of the planned spending on "Action for Cities" in 1990-91 is given in the table:

Action for cities expenditure
Estimated expenditure in the inner cities—1990-91

	£ million
England	
Estate Action: involving tenants in management of their homes, and improving them. Housing capital expenditure by local authorities	190·0
Funding for Housing Associations through Housing Corporations and through Local Authorities	620·0
Housing Investment Programme: special allocation for inner cities	100·0
Training, programmes to encourage enterprise (including support for small firms) and to help people back into work (Employment Department)	1,040·0
Support for inner city business, including Regional Selective Assistance, investment and innovation grants for small firms, and English Estates	192·0
Derelict Land Reclamation	21·0
Urban Programme	261·0
City Grant	49·0
Section 11 grants to LAs for staff expenditure to meet special needs of commonwealth citizens	73·0
Homelessness: special capital allocations to local Authorities and Housing Associations	147·0
Urban Development Corporations	542·0
Task Forces	23·0
City Action Teams	8·0
Safer cities	6·5
Roads (DTp programmes and TSG supported local authority roads)	300·0
Housing Action Trusts	42·0
City Technology Colleges	45·0
Scotland and Wales	400·0
Total	4,060·0

Expenditure (Norfolk)

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table showing a breakdown of the expenditure of Norwich city council since 1985-86 on its major areas of responsibility, set out in constant price terms;

(2) if he will publish a table showing a breakdown of the expenditure of Norfolk county council since 1985-86 on its major areas of responsibility, set out in constant price terms.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 6 March 1990]:* The information is as follows:

Net current expenditure by service in constant (1989-90) price terms[1]

£ million

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*[2]
Norfolk county council					
Education	170·610	180·516	190·271	195·016	[3]189·276
School meals and milk	4·867	5·554	4·195	3·705	3·435
Libraries, museums and art galleries	5·214	5·412	5·765	5·854	5·958
Personal social services	32·591	34·154	34·393	36·430	36·697
Police	34·813	37·935	39·349	40·623	42·123
Fire	8·686	9·343	9·740	9·696	9·914
Other Home Office services	4·401	4·668	5·272	5·894	6·177
Local transport	22·134	21·003	24·479	26·419	29·348
Local and environmental services	5·633	4·890	5·848	6·165	8·033
Other services	4·184	3·524	3·952	4·417	4·474
All services	293·132	307·000	323·262	334·220	335·435
Norwich county council					
Refuse collection and disposal	0·966	1·015	1·107	1·351	1·326
Recreation, parks, swimming pools	3·040	3·274	3·565	3·634	3·908
Town and country planning	0·917	0·986	1·049	0·715	0·774
Local and environmental services	1·886	0·652	2·515	3·101	3·416
Other services	0·788	0·418	0·331	0·869	1·434
All services	7·599	6·345	8·567	9·670	10·858

[1] Using GDP deflator to convert cash values to constant prices.
[2] Budget estimates.
[3] Polytechnics were transferred from the local authority sector in April 1989.

Seaton Carew (Bathing Waters)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for Seaton Carew centre *(a)* the dates in 1989 when total coliforms and E.coli samples were taken, *(b)* the corresponding total coliforms and E.coli results for each date and *(c)* the EEC bathing waters directive [76/160/EEC] conforming level for both total coliforms and E.coli.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 6 March 1990]:* The results obtained over the course of the 1989 bathing season are as follows:

Date	*Total coliforms Number per 100 ml*	*Faecal Coliforms Number per 100 ml*
5 May 1989	31,000	5,200
19 May 1989	780,000	66,000
26 May 1989	2,800	1,800

Date	Total coliforms Number per 100 ml	Faecal Coliforms Number per 100 ml
2 June 1989	1,700	430
9 June 1989	51,000	51,000
16 June 1989	5,800	1,600
23 June 1989	14,000	4,300
30 June 1989	350	130
7 July 1989	13,500	9,400
21 July 1989	300,000	300,000
28 July 1989	12,000	5,600
11 August 1989	40,000	20,000
18 August 1989	2,700,000	1,220,000
24 August 1989	4,600	2,500
1 September 1989	132,000	14,000
7 September 1989	24,900	1,500
8 September 1989	25,000	5,400
14 September 1989	38,000	5,700
15 September 1989	95,000	21,000
21 September 1989	260	120
22 September 1989	1,200,000	4,100,000
28 September 1989	74,000	37,000
29 September 1989	9,700	2,100

The mandatory standards set in directive 76/160/EEC are 10,000 per 100 mls for total coliforms and 2,000 per 100 mls for faecal coliforms. Northumbrian Water plc has plans to improve the bathing waters at Seaton Carew to ensure that they consistently meet the coliform standards.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether his Department has received any representations on the effects of the community charge on the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether his Department will consider modifying the application of the community charge towards bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 6 March 1990]:* My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this matter. He has no plans to modify the proposals for the treatment of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the purposes of the community charge and the new business rate which were given effect by the Standard Community Charge and Non-Domestic Rating (Definition of Domestic Property) Order 1990 [SI No. 162], which came into force on 2 March.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the provision made in his Department's expenditure plans for grant aid to local authorities for work in coastal protection and sea defence.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 8 March 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

Preventable Loss

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the number of professionally qualified loss prevention staff employed by his Department and the qualifications held by such staff, excluding qualifications obtained during police or military service.

Mr. Cope: The Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office are aware of the need to prevent loss and rely on a series of control mechanisms, systems and procedures which are undertaken by various groups of staff, including internal auditors.

Currently within the Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Office and the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, there are 31 fully qualified members of the Institute of Internal Auditors, (MIIA) and 23 more are under training.

Thirty one other members of staff hold professional accountancy and auditing qualifications.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will introduce the necessary legislation to prohibit the discharge of inadequately treated sewage into coastal waters, rivers and inland waterways and to require that full treatment plants are provided in future for dealing with sewage in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A proposal for a European Council directive on municipal waste water treatment is at present being considered. Among other matters, the proposed directive lays down minimum requirements for the collection and treatment of domestic, industrial and drainage waters entering the sewerage system. The Government are carrying out a study of the environmental implications and the likely costs associated with this directive. If the directive is adopted, any legislation necessary to implement its requirements will be introduced.

Computers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the number of persons employed by his Department in systems, programming and computer operation, including the major operations carried out.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The number of computer staff employed on information technology in Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Office and Police Authority for Northern Ireland is as follows:

	Numbers
Senior systems analyst	71
Systems analysts	144
Programmer analysts	133
Programmers	129
Operations and data processing	116
Total	593

Local Government Finance

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to ensure parity in valuation for rating purposes throughout the district council areas in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* Parity of treatment in valuation for rating purposes throughout district council areas in Northern Ireland is long established. Parity is achieved through periodic general revaluations which establish for the Province as a whole, patterns and levels of valuations—a tone, which is preserved throughout the life of the valuation list. Revisions of valuation which arise between revaluations are performed within the comprehensive and detailed provisions of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 by the valuation and lands office. The Commissioner of Valuation, by the direction of policy and its application through a district valuer office network across Northern Ireland, ensures consistent treatment under this order. A comprehensive system of appeal exists for aggrieved ratepayers with first appeals to the Commissioner of Valuation and thereafter to the Lands Tribunal for Northern Ireland and, if appropriate, Court of Appeal and House of Lords.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* increases in regional rate levied in cash and percentage terms, *(b)* each district council rate increase in cash and percentage terms and *(c)* domestic and non-domestic rates charged to ratepayers in each district council area in cash percentage charge terms, in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The information is as follows:

(a) The regional rate increases were:

	1985-86 (pence)	*1986-87 (pence)*	*1987-88 (pence)*	*1988-89 (pence)*	*1989-90 (pence)*
Regional rate	100·87	110·38	113·53	122·59	138·07
Increase from previous year	7·54	9·51	3·15	9·06	15·48
Percentage increase	8·1	9·4	2·9	7·98	12·63

(b) The district council increases were:

	1985-86 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	42·00	1·50	+3·70
Ards	50·00	—	—
Armagh	34·50	1·00	+2·99
Ballymena	36·35	0·85	+2·39
Ballymoney	42·25	1·25	+3·05
Banbridge	44·93	4·26	+10·47
Belfast	69·04	4·19	+6·46
Carrickfergus	55·00	2·25	+4·27
Castlereagh	33·00	1·00	+3·13
Coleraine	45·00	2·25	+5·26
Cookstown	35·85	3·30	+10·14
Craigavon	54·93	2·01	+3·80
Derry	59·50	4·40	+8·00
Down	45·00	—	—
Dungannon	38·00	3·00	+8·57
Fermanagh	42·75	2·75	+6·88
Larne	45·00	1·50	+3·45
Limavady	35·00	3·00	+9·38
Lisburn	46·24	0·64	+1·40
Magherafell	33·04	2·94	+9·77
Moyle	59·75	5·00	+9·30
Newry and Bourne	49·00	3·00	+6·52
Newtownabbey	52·60	4·60	+9·58
North Down	51·50	4·50	+9·57
Omagh	43·00	2·00	+4·88
Strabane	43·50	2·00	+4·82

	1986-87 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	45·75	3·75	+8·93
Ards	53·00	3·00	+6·00
Armagh	38·00	3·50	+10·14
Ballymena	38·00	1·65	+4·54
Ballymoney	45·25	3·00	+7·10
Banbridge	47·97	3·04	+6·77
Belfast	76·36	7·32	+10·60
Carrickfergus	57·50	2·50	+4·55
Castlereagh	39·08	6·08	+18·42
Coleraine	49·00	4·00	+8·89
Cookstown	39·75	3·90	+10·88
Craigavon	60·21	5·28	+9·61
Derry	67·00	7·50	+12·61
Down	53·00	8·00	+17·78
Dungannon	41·50	3·50	+9·21
Fermanagh	48·75	6·00	+14·04
Larne	49·25	4·25	+9·44
Limavady	39·00	4·00	+11·43
Lisburn	48·80	2·56	+5·54
Magherafelt	36·56	3·52	+10·65
Moyle	65·75	6·00	+10·04
Newry and Mourne	54·30	5·30	+10·82
Newtownabbey	55·11	2·51	+4·77
North Down	56·90	5·40	+10·49
Omagh	47·00	4·00	+9·30
Strabane	50·50	7·00	+16·09

	1987-88 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	48·50	2·75	+6·01
Ards	53·00	—	—
Armagh	38·00	—	—
Ballymena	39·85	1·85	+4·87
Ballymoney	46·00	0·75	+1·66
Banbridge	50·98	3·01	+6·27
Belfast	80·03	3·67	+4·81
Carrickfergus	59·41	1·91	+3·32
Castlereagh	41·00	1·92	+4·91
Coleraine	50·00	1·00	+2·04
Cookstown	43·00	3·25	+8·18

	1987-88 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Craigavon	63·35	3·14	+5·22
Derry	69·50	2·50	+3·73
Down	60·00	7·00	+13·21
Dungannon	44·00	2·50	+6·02
Fermanagh	50·75	2·00	+4·10
Larne	52·55	3·30	+6·70
Limavady	40·95	1·95	+5·00
Lisburn	49·75	0·95	+1·95
Magherafelt	41·05	4·49	+12·28
Moyle	65·75	—	—
Newry and Mourne	59·70	5·40	+9·94
Newtownabbey	57·24	2·13	+3·86
North Down	60·90	4·00	+7·03
Omagh	51·65	4·65	+9·89
Strabane	54·00	3·50	+6·93

	1988-89 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	51·00	2·50	+5·15
Ards	54·00	1·00	+1·89
Armagh	41·00	3·00	+7·89
Ballymena	42·85	3·00	+7·53
Ballymoney	47·00	1·00	+2·17
Banbridge	50·98	—	—
Belfast	83·96	3·93	+4·91
Carrickfergus	62·50	3·09	+5·20
Castlereagh	39·90	−1·10	−2·68
Coleraine	53·00	3·00	+6·00
Cookstown	42·75	−0·25	−0·58
Craigavon	63·35	—	—
Derry	72·55	3·05	+4·39
Down	65·00	5·00	+8·33
Dungannon	44·00	—	—
Fermanagh	53·50	2·75	+5·42
Larne	55·75	3·20	+6·09
Limavady	43·50	2·55	+6·23
Lisburn	53·57	3·82	+7·68
Magherafelt	43·50	2·45	+5·97
Moyle	65·50	−0·25	−0·38
Newry and Mourne	59·70	—	—
Newtownabbey	60·06	2·82	+4·93
North Down	63·70	2·80	+4·60
Omagh	55·00	3·35	+6·49
Strabane	57·00	3·00	+5·56

	1989-90 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	53·00	2·00	+3·92
Ards	57·50	3·50	+6·48
Armagh	44·00	3·00	+7·32
Ballymena	44·00	1·15	+2·68
Ballymoney	50·25	3·25	+6·91
Banbridge	50·98	—	—
Belfast	83·96	—	—
Carrickfergus	63·75	3·25	+5·2
Castlereagh	37·90	−2·00	−5·01
Coleraine	55·00	2·00	+3·77
Cookstown	47·75	5·00	+11·7
Craigavon	67·47	4·12	+6·5
Derry	76·80	4·25	+5·86
Down	68·00	3·00	+4·62
Dungannon	44·00	—	—
Fermanagh	55·50	2·00	+3·74
Larne	56·75	1·00	+1·79
Limavady	47·00	3·50	+8·05
Lisburn	53·57	—	—
Magherafelt	46·34	2·84	+6·53
Moyle	68·40	2·90	+4·43
Newry and Mourne	58·00	−1·70	−2·85
Newtownabbey	64·10	4·04	+6·73
North Down	65·85	2·15	+3·38

	1989-90 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Omagh	58·50	3·50	+6·36
Strabane	60·75	3·75	+6·58

(c) (i) the overall domestic rates were:

	1985-86 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	130·87	9·03	+7·41
Ards	138·87	7·53	+5·73
Armagh	123·37	8·53	+7·43
Ballymena	125·22	8·38	+7·17
Ballymoney	131·12	8·78	+7·18
Banbridge	133·80	11·79	+9·66
Belfast	157·91	11·72	+8·02
Carrickfergus	143·87	9·78	+7·29
Castlereagh	121·87	8·53	+7·53
Coleraine	133·87	9·78	+7·88
Cookstown	124·72	10·83	+9·51
Craigavon	143·80	9·54	+7·11
Derry	148·37	11·93	+8·74
Down	133·87	7·53	+5·96
Dungannon	126·87	10·53	+9·05
Fermanagh	131·62	10·28	+8·47
Larne	133·87	9·03	+7·23
Limavady	123·87	10·53	+9·29
Lisburn	135·11	8·17	+6·44
Magherafelt	121·91	10·47	+9·40
Moyle	148·62	12·53	+9·21
Newry and Mourne	137·87	10·53	+8·27
Newtownabbey	141·47	12·13	+9·38
North Down	140·37	12·03	+9·37
Omagh	131·87	9·53	+7·79
Strabane	132·37	9·53	+7·76

	1986-87 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	144·13	13·26	+10·13
Ards	151·38	12·51	+9·01
Armagh	136·38	13·01	+10·55
Ballymena	136·38	11·16	+8·91
Ballymoney	143·63	12·51	+9·54
Banbridge	146·35	12·55	+9·38
Belfast	174·74	16·83	+10·66
Carrickfergus	155·88	12·01	+8·35
Castlereagh	137·46	15·59	+12·79
Coleraine	147·38	13·51	+10·09
Cookstown	138·13	13·41	+10·75
Craigavon	158·59	14·79	+10·29
Derry	165·38	17·01	+11·46
Down	151·38	17·51	+13·08
Dungannon	139·88	13·01	+10·25
Fermanagh	147·13	15·51	+11·78
Larne	147·63	13·76	+10·28
Limavady	137·38	13·51	+10·91
Lisburn	147·18	12·07	+8·93
Magherafelt	134·94	13·03	+10·69
Moyle	164·33	15·51	+10·44
Newry and Mourne	152·68	14·81	+10·74
Newtownabbey	153·49	12·02	+8·50
North Down	155·28	14·91	+10·62
Omagh	145·38	13·51	+10·24
Strabane	148·88	16·51	+12·47

	1987-88 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	150·03	5·90	+4·09
Ards	154·53	3·15	+2·08
Armagh	139·53	3·15	+2·31
Ballymena	141·38	5·00	+3·67
Ballymoney	147·53	3·90	+2·72
Banbridge	152·51	6·16	+4·21
Belfast	181·56	6·82	+3·90
Carrickfergus	160·94	5·06	+3·25
Castlereagh	142·53	5·07	+3·69
Coleraine	151·53	4·15	+2·82
Cookstown	144·53	6·40	+4·63
Craigavon	164·88	6·29	+3·97
Derry	171·03	5·65	+3·42
Down	161·53	10·15	+6·70
Dungannon	145·53	5·65	+4·04
Fermanagh	152·28	5·15	+3·50
Larne	154·08	6·45	+4·37
Limavady	142·48	5·10	+3·71
Lisburn	151·28	4·10	+2·79
Magherafelt	142·58	7·64	+5·66
Moyle	167·28	3·15	+1·92
Newry and Mourne	161·23	8·55	+5·60
Newtownabbey	158·77	5·28	+3·44
North Down	162·43	7·15	+4·60
Omagh	153·18	7·80	+5·37
Strabane	155·53	6·65	+4·47

	1988-89 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	161·59	11·56	+7·71
Ards	164·59	10·06	+6·51
Armagh	151·59	12·06	+8·64
Ballymena	153·44	12·06	+8·53
Ballymoney	157·59	10·06	+6·82
Banbridge	161·57	9·06	+5·94
Belfast	194·55	12·99	+7·15
Carrickfergus	173·09	12·15	+7·55
Castlereagh	150·49	7·96	+5·58
Coleraine	163·59	12·06	+7·96
Cookstown	153·34	8·81	+6·10
Craigavon	173·94	9·06	+5·49
Derry	183·14	12·11	+7·08
Down	175·59	14·06	+8·70
Dungannon	154·59	9·06	+6·23
Fermanagh	164·09	11·81	+7·76
Larne	166·34	12·26	+7·96
Limavady	154·09	11·61	+8·15
Lisburn	164·16	12·88	+8·51
Magherafelt	154·09	11·51	+8·07
Moyle	176·09	8·81	+5·27
Newry and Mourne	170·29	9·06	+5·62
Newtownabbey	170·65	11·88	+7·48
North Down	174·29	11·86	+7·31
Omagh	165·59	12·41	+8·10
Strabane	167·59	12·06	+7·75

	1989-90 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	179·07	17·48	+10·82
Ards	183·57	18·98	+11·53
Armagh	170·07	18·48	+12·19
Ballymena	170·07	16·63	+10·84
Ballymoney	176·32	18·73	+11·89
Banbridge	177·05	15·48	+9·58
Belfast	210·03	15·48	+7·96
Carrickfergus	191·82	18·73	+10·82
Castlereagh	163·97	13·48	+8·96
Coleraine	181·07	17·48	+10·69
Cookstown	173·82	20·48	+13·36
Craigavon	193·54	19·60	+11·27
Derry	202·87	19·73	+10·77
Down	194·07	18·48	+10·52
Dungannon	170·07	15·48	+10·01

	1989-90 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Fermanagh	181·57	17·48	+10·65
Larne	182·82	16·48	+9·91
Limavady	173·07	18·98	+12·32
Lisburn	179·64	15·48	+9·43
Magherafelt	172·41	18·32	+11·89
Moyle	194·47	18·38	+10·44
Newry and Mourne	184·07	13·78	+8·09
Newtownabbey	190·17	19·52	+11·44
North Down	191·92	17·63	+10·12
Omagh	184·57	18·98	+11·46
Strabane	186·82	19·23	+11·47

(c)(ii) The overall non-domestic rates were:

	1985-86 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	142·87	9·03	+6·75
Ards	150·87	7·53	+5·25
Armagh	135·37	8·53	+6·73
Ballymena	137·22	8·38	+6·50
Ballymoney	143·12	8·78	+6·54
Banbridge	145·80	11·79	+8·80
Belfast	169·91	11·72	+7·41
Carrickfergus	155·87	9·78	+6·69
Castlereagh	133·87	8·53	+6·81
Coleraine	145·87	9·78	+7·19
Cookstown	136·72	10·83	+8·60
Craigavon	155·80	9·54	+6·52
Derry	160·37	11·93	+8·04
Down	145·87	7·53	+5·44
Dungannon	138·87	10·53	+8·20
Fermanagh	143·62	10·28	+7·71
Larne	145·87	9·03	+6·60
Limavady	135·87	10·53	+8·40
Lisburn	147·11	8·17	+5·88
Magherefelt	133·91	10·47	+8·48
Moyle	160·62	12·53	+8·46
Newry and Mourne	149·87	10·53	+7·56
Newtownabbey	153·47	12·13	+8·58
North Down	152·37	12·03	+8·57
Omagh	143·87	9·53	+7·09
Strabane	144·37	9·53	+7·07

	1986-87 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	156·13	13·26	+9·28
Ards	163·38	12·51	+8·29
Armagh	148·38	13·01	+9·61
Ballymena	148·38	11·16	+8·13
Ballymoney	155·63	12·51	+8·74
Banbridge	158·35	12·55	+8·61
Belfast	186·74	16·83	+9·91
Carrickfergus	167·88	12·01	+7·71
Castlereagh	149·46	15·59	+11·65
Coleraine	159·38	13·51	+9·26
Cookstown	150·13	13·41	+9·81
Craigavon	170·59	14·79	+9·49
Derry	177·38	17·01	+10·61
Down	163·38	17·51	+12·00
Dungannon	151·88	13·01	+9·37
Fermanagh	159·13	15·51	+10·80
Larne	159·63	13·76	+9·43
Limavady	149·38	13·51	+9·94
Lisburn	159·18	12·07	+8·20
Magherafelt	146·94	13·03	+9·73
Moyle	176·13	15·51	+9·66
Newry and Mourne	164·68	14·81	+9·88
Newtownabbey	165·49	12·02	+7·83
North Down	167·28	14·91	+9·79
Omagh	157·38	13·51	+9·39
Strabane	160·88	16·51	+11·44

	1987-88 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	162·03	5·90	+3·78
Ards	166·53	3·15	+1·93
Armagh	151·53	3·15	+2·12
Ballymena	153·38	5·00	+3·37
Ballymoney	159·53	3·90	+2·51
Banbridge	164·51	6·16	+3·89
Belfast	193·56	6·82	+3·65
Carrickfergus	172·94	5·06	+3·01
Castlereagh	154·53	5·07	+3·39
Coleraine	163·53	4·15	+2·60
Cookstown	156·53	6·40	+4·26
Craigavon	176·88	6·29	+3·69
Derry	183·03	5·65	+3·19
Down	173·53	10·15	+6·21
Dunganoon	157·53	5·65	+3·72
Fermanagh	164·28	5·15	+3·24
Larne	166·08	6·45	+4·04
Limavady	154·48	5·10	+3·41
Lisburn	163·28	4·10	+2·58
Magherafelt	154·58	7·64	+5·20
Moyle	179·28	3·15	+1·79
Newry and Mourne	173·23	8·55	+5·19
Newtownabbey	170·77	5·28	+3·19
North Down	174·43	7·15	+4·27
Omagh	165·18	7·80	+4·96
Strabane	167·53	6·65	+4·13

	1988-89 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	173·59	+11·56	+7·13
Ards	176·59	+10·06	+6·04
Armagh	163·59	+12·06	+7·96
Ballymena	165·44	+12·06	+7·86
Ballymoney	169·59	+10·06	+6·31
Banbridge	173·57	+9·06	+5·51
Belfast	206·55	+12·99	+6·71
Carrickfergus	185·09	+12·15	+7·03
Castlereagh	162·49	+7·96	+5·15
Coleraine	175·59	+12·06	+7·37
Cookstown	165·34	+8·81	+5·63
Craigavon	185·94	+9·06	5·12
Derry	195·14	+12·11	+6·62
Down	187·59	+14·06	+8·10
Dungannon	166·59	+9·06	+5·75
Fermanagh	176·09	+11·81	+7·19
Larne	178·34	+12·26	+7·38
Limavady	166·09	+11·61	+7·52
Lisburn	176·16	+12·88	+7·89
Magherafelt	166·09	+11·51	+7·45
Moyle	188·09	+8·81	+4·91
Newry and Mourne	182·29	+9·06	+5·23
Newtownabbey	182·65	+11·88	+6·96
North Down	186·29	+11·86	+6·80
Omagh	177·59	+12·41	+7·51
Strabane	179·59	+12·06	+7·20

	1989-90 Rate pence	Increase pence	Percentage increase
Antrim	191·07	+17·48	+10·07
Ards	195·57	+18·98	+10·85
Armagh	182·07	+18·48	+11·30
Ballymena	182·07	+16·63	+10·05
Ballymoney	188·32	+18·73	+11·04
Banbridge	189·05	+15·48	+8·92
Belfast	222·03	+15·48	+7·49
Carrickfergus	203·82	+18·73	+10·12
Castlereagh	175·97	+13·48	+8·30
Coleraine	193·07	+17·48	+9·96
Cookstown	185·82	+20·48	+12·39
Craigavon	205·54	+19·60	+90·54
Derry	214·87	+19·73	+10·11

	Rate pence	*1989-90 Increase pence*	*Percentage increase*
Down	206·07	+18·48	+9·85
Dungannon	182·07	+15·48	+9·29
Fermanagh	193·57	+17·48	+9·93
Larne	194·82	+16·48	+9·24
Limavady	185·07	+18·98	+11·43
Lisburn	191·64	+15·48	+8·79
Magherafelt	184·41	+18·32	+11·03
Moyle	206·47	+18·38	+9·77
Newry and Mourne	196·07	+13·78	+7·56
Newtownabbey	202·17	+19·52	+10·69
North Down	203·92	+17·63	+9·46
Omagh	196·57	+18·98	+10·69
Strabane	198·82	+19·23	+10·71

TRANSPORT

Kilkiel Harbour

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on which dates, during the past six months, boats registered in the Republic of Ireland have entered Kilkiel harbour; and whether these boats have now paid light dues to the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a management matter for the Commissioners of Irish Lights as the collecting authority for light dues.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will take to improve the lateral stability of heavy goods vehicles with particular reference to loading and wind impact.

Mr. Atkins: We are aware of the problems caused by wind impact on heavy goods vehicles. That is why warnings are issued to all drivers of high-sided vehicles in windy conditions. It is up to the drivers and operators to heed these warnings, to load their vehicles appropriately, to drive carefully, to avoid particularly dangerous sections of road and, if necessary, to stop in a suitable place until conditions improve.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the specifications for technical performance of the docklands light railway that were laid down when the original finance was approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him yesterday at column *665*.

Graffiti

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has *(a)* on the annual cost of cleaning off graffiti from London Underground premises and *(b)* on the extra annual cost of policing relating to the prevention of graffiti in each of the last five years for which statistics are available;

(2) whether he will publish a table showing the cost of removing graffiti on each of the London Underground lines.

Mr. Portillo: The cost to London Underground Ltd. of cleaning graffiti from trains and stations has increased substantially over the past five years to an estimated £2·5 million in 1989. Figures for individual Underground lines are not readily available since depot and cleaning facilities are often shared between lines. The cost to London Buses Ltd. of cleaning graffiti from buses and garages has increased from about £1·5 million in 1986 to over £2 million in 1989.

A special British Transport police graffiti squad has been set up to combat graffiti vandalism on the Underground. This is estimated to have cost about £250,000 in 1989. British Transport police officers are also expected to prevent graffiti vandalism as part of their normal duties. Crime on London Buses, including vandalism and graffiti, is dealt with by the Metropolitan police.

Coastal Rescue Services

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce additional measures to improve the efficiency of the coastguard and other search and rescue services along the north Devon coast and Bristol channel.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am satisfied that the current facilities for co-ordinating and actioning maritime search and rescue operations in this area are fully adequate.

THE ARTS

"Allée à Chantilly"

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has yet decided where the Cézanne work of art, "Allée à Chantilly", received by his Department in lieu of Inland Revenue debts for the year 1988-89 is to be displayed.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on 14 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *239*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in rank order the total revenue raised from the 21 different forms of taxation for each year from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: Recent years' figures can be found in tables 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15 in "Financial Statistics", published by the Central Statistical Office. Earlier years' figures can be found using the CSO database and the identifiers given in the tables. The database can be accessed on line by the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax in pounds per week at 1989-90 prices a married couple with one earner on average earnings, with two children paid, treating child benefit as negative income, in 1978-79 and in 1989-90.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross earnings a couple with one earner on average earnings, with two children, paid in tax, treating child benefit as negative income tax, in 1978-79 and in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: Figures for 1978-79 have been placed in the Library of the House, as noted in the *Official Report*, 13 April 1989, column *624*, and estimates for 1989-90 were given in reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 8 January 1990 at column *559*.

Rented Property

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of revenue forgone by the Exchequer through the tax incentives to landlords investing in the business expansion scheme since April 1988.

Mr. Lilley: The cost of BES tax relief on residential property in 1988-89 is provisionally estimated as £110 million. Information for 1989-90 is not yet available.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of manufacturing investment made each year since 1979 by *(a)* foreign direct investors in the United Kingdom and *(b)* indigenous manufacturers; and what are the percentage annual changes these figures represent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Comparable information relates to capital expenditure on fixed assets by foreign owned manufacturing businesses and by United Kingdom-owned manufacturing businesses. It is available, on the current definition of manufacturing in the 1980 standard industrial classification, only from 1981. Information on foreign ownership is available biennially up to 1985 and annually up to 1987. The data are given from 1981 in the table.

Net capital expenditure of manufacturing[1] private sector businesses in the United Kingdom

	Foreign owned businesses[2]	*United Kingdom owned businesses[3]*	*Total*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*
1981	1,402	4,091	5,493
1983	1,397	4,664	6,061
1985	1,844	6,579	8,423
1986	1,715	6,683	8,398
1987	1,989	7,340	9,329
Percentage increase from 1981 to 1987	41·9	79·4	

Source: Censuses of production.

[1] Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1980.

[2] Foreign owned businesses are defined as those controlled or owned by companies incorporated overseas.

[3] Includes privatised businesses from the year of privatisation.

Fiscal Incentives (Women)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the need for fiscal incentives to enable more women to return to work.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has received a number of representations on this subject.

Budget

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his forthcoming financial statement and budget report.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has received a variety of representations from a number of individuals and organisations.

Bank of England

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the Governor of the Bank of England; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Company Dividends

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what proportion dividend distribution by companies increased between 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimates of dividend payments on ordinary and preference shares may be obtained from the CSO databank—a collection of macro-economic time series in computer readable form to which the House of Commons Library has direct access. Data are currently available for the period up to third quarter 1989.

Investment

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) by what proportion investment in manufacturing industry fell in the second half of 1988 and in the first half of 1989; and if he is able to provide an estimate of the change in investment in the second half of 1989;

(2) what was the level of investment in manufacturing industry in 1989 and 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Expressed at 1985 prices, investment by manufacturing industry in fixed assets including leasing, is estimated to have been £12 billion in 1989, compared to £11·2 billion in 1979.

Such investment seasonally adjusted barely changed between the first and second halves of 1988. The first half of 1989 showed an increase of 6 per cent. followed by a fall in the second half provisionally estimated to be 1 per cent.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the proportion of capital investment in the service sector which has been devoted to the importation of goods and materials.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest year for which it is possible to compile estimates of the import content of investment is 1985, the last year for which comprehensive input-output tables exist.

The import content of purchases calculated in the process of compiling the input-output tables is based upon approximate commodity flow methods—there is no statistical inquiry which establishes the import content of capital investment directly. The cases of goods and materials including and excluding vehicles, ships and aircraft (VSA), and capital investment including and excluding investment in new buildings and works (NBW), are given in the table.

Capital investment of the Services sector

	including NBW *Per cent.*	*excluding NBW* *Per cent.*
Import content from goods and materials (including VSA)	18	47
Import content from goods and materials (excluding VSA)	13	35

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) in what sectors of commerce and industry investment was higher in 1989 than 10 years earlier;

(2) what was the level of investment between 1979 and 1989 in those areas of industry and commerce in which there is or was public involvement and in those which are wholly within the private sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation, by industry (other than manufacturing), may be obtained from the CSO databank—a collection of macroeconomic time series in computer readable form to which the House of Commons Library has direct access. For manufacturing, figures up to end 1989 were published by the CSO in a press notice "Capital Expenditure: Provisional Estimates for Q4 1989" on 15 February. The latest estimates of investment by other industries cover the period up to end 1987 or, where possible, 1988. The estimates cover investment by the private sector, and, where appropriate, include investment by public sector bodies. The CSO's "United Kingdom National Accounts", 1989 edition, shows which industry estimates are available.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of companies investing in the United Kingdom are wholly owned by Japan or the United States of America; and what is the ratio of investment by these companies to that by companies which are in United Kingdom ownership.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information relates to capital expenditure on fixed assets by manufacturing companies based within the United Kingdom. The annual census of production provides such an analysis by country of ownership. The latest follows:

Net capital expenditure by manufacturing companies[2] in the United Kingdom by country of ownership[1]

Country of ownership	*Number of businesses*	*Net capital expenditure in 1987* *£ million*	*as percentage of United Kingdom*
United States of America	1,161	1,180·1	16
Japan	34	86·7	1
All other foreign owned businesses	1,088	722·3	10
United Kingdom owned business	143,210	7,339·7	100
Total	145,493	9,328·8	

[1] Foreign owned business are defined as those controlled or owned by companies incorporated overseas.
[2] Divisions 2-4: Standard Industrial Classification, Revised 1980.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1990-91, assuming no change in company behaviour and assuming a 50 per cent. increase in investment in plant and machinery (*a*) the capital allowances claimable by companies in respect of plant and machinery assuming that first year allowances of: (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 40 per cent., (iii) 35 per cent. and (iv) 30 per cent. were available, (*b*) corporation tax payments forgone in 1991-92 as a result of such claims and (*c*) the increase in the rate of corporation tax which would be required to replace the revenue foregone under (*b*).

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 7 March 1990]:* I regret that the requested estimates could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a breakdown for table 8.7 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1989 of capital allowances described as other, giving figures separately for each type of allowance subsumed in this heading.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 7 March 1990]:* The only breakdown of these capital allowances that can be reliably estimated is provided in tables 8.8 and 8.9 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1989" and in similar tables in earlier editions.

Interest Rates

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the current levels of interest rates in each member state of the European Community and in Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Ryder: Following is the information requested:

Short term nominal interest rates in the EC, United States and Japan

	Latest figures[1]
United Kingdom	15·3
United States	8·3
Japan	7·3
Germany	8·6
France	10·8
Italy	13·3
Belgium	10·6
Denmark	12·0
Greece	17·0
Ireland	12·0
Luxembourg	10·6
Netherlands	9·0
Portugal	13·8
Spain	15·6

[1] Interest rates refer to close 5 March, except Denmark (8 March), Ireland and Portugal (January), and Greece (December)

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many internal auditors are employed in those departments for which he is responsible and at what cost; how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is subcontracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 March 1990]:* A total of 180 internal auditors are employed in departments for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is responsible. Their direct costs amount to £3·767 million

per annum. A total of 272 reports were produced in 1989 or in the nearest convenient accounting period. One of these was drawn to the attention of a Minister.

Internal audit work in three departments was sub-contracted to private firms. In two of these, the whole internal audit function was contracted out; in the other department specialist expertise was obtained. The total cost of these sub-contracts amounted to £65,000.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Rothamsted Experimental Station

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the reasons for Mrs. Clark's dismissal from her post at Rothamsted experimental station, Hertfordshire.

Mr. Jackson: Mrs. Clark was an employee of the Lawes Agricultural Trust, the governing body of the Rothamsted experimental station which is grant-aided by the agricultural and food research council (AFRC). The staff of the Rothamsted experimental station are employed on terms and conditions of service laid down by the AFRC.

I understand that Mrs. Clark was dismissed following a disciplinary hearing conducted in accordance with the council's rules and procedures. An appeal to the Civil Service Appeal Board is pending and therefore I am unable to comment further.

Avon County Council

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be meeting Councillor Maureen Wheadon of Avon county council; and what is the purpose of the meeting.

Mr. MacGregor: No such meeting has been arranged.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to appeal against the judgment of Mr. Justice Hutchinson concerning his decisions in respect of Beechen Cliff school, Bath and the proposals of Avon county council; and if he will make a statement about that judgment.

Mr. MacGregor: I propose to reconsider the application from Beechen Cliff school, Bath and the statutory proposals from the Avon county council in the light of Mr. Justice Hutchinson's judgment. The judgment concerned the handling of a particular set of proposals. The principle of the grant-maintained option being available to schools is not in question.

Discretionary Grants

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide the statistics relating to discretionary grants made by local education authorities for full-time and sandwich courses, broken down for each individual local education authority in England and Wales by monetary amount and for the last five years.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The data requested are listed in the table:

All[1] discretionary awards made under Section 1(6) and Section 2 of the 1962 Education Act (as amended).

	1983-84 £000's	*1984-85 £000's*	*1985-86 £000's*	*1986-87 £000's*	*1987-88 £000's*
Sheffield	2,040·8	2,216·7	2,346·4	2,281·8	2,309·2
Bradford	1,582·7	1,713·1	1,740·6	1,752·8	2,284·7
Calderdale	349·7	313·8	373·4	320·1	465·2
Kirklees	1,356·1	1,396·1	1,663·6	1,733·6	1,967·9
Leeds	1,113·5	1,255·8	994·4	1,520·8	2,067·9
Wakefield	638·9	793·7	785·6	818·0	1,023·4
Gateshead	198·0	247·2	345·6	281·6	309·3
Newcastle upon Tyne	736·7	640·3	692·0	681·4	720·9
North Tyneside	631·1	679·3	623·3	848·3	1,002·2
South Tyneside	245·2	243·1	285·7	260·6	340·9
Sunderland	774·8	999·6	1,242·2	1,328·8	1,202·9
Isles of Scilly	63·3	69·5	79·3	75·7	85·3
Avon	2,456·5	2,275·4	2,335·1	3,179·5	3,280·8
Bedfordshire	933·3	822·4	1,670·8	1,286·3	1,917·6
Berkshire	1,402·9	1,279·8	1,293·3	1,061·3	1,330·4
Buckinghamshire	927·4	932·0	964·4	862·9	979·5
Cambridgeshire	990·5	1,048·4	891·8	1,020·0	1,169·5
Cheshire	2,452·0	3,139·0	3,408·2	3,763·0	3,955·6
Cleveland	1,382·4	1,639·9	1,538·0	1,477·5	1,527·9
Cornwall	997·0	1,130·9	1,309·1	1,377·2	1,308·5
Cumbria	1,841·5	1,768·8	1,821·6	2,219·1	2,306·8
Derbyshire	2,201·5	2,430·6	2,559·6	2,732·1	2,586·7
Devon	3,008·1	3,387·7	3,365·2	3,870·6	4,282·0
Dorset	1,836·5	1,499·5	1,559·4	1,733·9	1,898·6
Durham	1,016·0	878·1	896·3	881·3	788·5
East Sussex	1,918·1	1,838·7	1,430·1	1,303·7	1,353·9
Essex	4,066·1	4,326·6	4,558·0	5,113·9	4,902·7
Gloucestershire	2,000·4	2,334·2	2,354·1	2,436·4	2,266·7
Hampshire	4,818·4	4,801·1	7,269·1	8,383·3	8,503·9
Hereford and Worcester	1,063·9	1,137·8	1,016·5	1,061·1	1,007·0
Hertfordshire	2,096·2	1,650·3	1,612·4	1,789·7	2,111·0
Humberside	2,798·0	2,949·0	3,226·2	3,234·6	3,481·4
Isle of Wight	315·0	351·2	356·8	396·6	411·2
Kent	5,017·5	4,912·4	3,990·2	5,193·9	5,221·5
Lancashire	4,110·7	5,302·5	4,887·7	5,284·8	5,323·5
Leicestershire	2,494·3	2,997·5	3,289·2	3,581·1	4,086·2
Lincolnshire	1,382·8	1,496·5	1,504·9	1,567·7	1,496·6

	1983-84 £000's	1984-85 £000's	1985-86 £000's	1986-87 £000's	1987-88 £000's
Norfolk	1,465·0	1,587·4	1,672·0	1,746·3	1,854·9
North Yorkshire	3,385·0	3,603·5	4,070·4	4,448·9	4,910·8
Northamptonshire	912·3	954·9	875·7	1,231·1	960·3
Northumberland	864·9	932·6	956·6	1,332·1	1,370·3
Nottinghamshire	1,672·9	2,018·5	2,624·3	2,890·3	3,054·4
Oxfordshire	629·4	694·3	908·3	1,093·5	956·7
Shropshire	1,047·8	1,003·4	1,125·1	1,260·7	1,362·9
Somerset	791·4	708·3	469·6	955·9	1,180·9
Staffordshire	1,422·4	1,443·2	1,423·8	1,597·6	2,094·2
Barking	231·0	246·0	323·5	412·3	400·6
Barnet	788·6	704·8	708·3	732·2	585·7
Bexley	410·0	511·1	401·0	405·4	329·3
Brent	2,148·8	1,951·8	2,825·3	3,702·8	3,376·6
Bromley	444·2	474·0	532·3	657·8	698·9
Croydon	515·7	484·4	508·4	517·4	587·5
Ealing	556·5	549·1	663·1	910·0	1,102·1
Enfield	347·4	331·9	261·4	367·3	431·8
Haringey	587·5	632·2	694·5	780·3	711·8
Harrow	346·6	320·8	336·9	308·7	258·3
Havering	399·7	390·5	447·3	315·7	458·9
Hillingdon	437·8	307·6	294·6	562·0	465·7
Hounslow	260·8	196·4	254·5	334·3	347·3
Kingston-upon-Thames	148·3	181·9	174·5	239·0	204·1
Merton	130·5	164·3	187·7	283·2	234·2
Newham	372·3	491·7	486·2	638·8	676·9
Redbridge	396·6	329·7	348·2	337·5	341·3
Richmond-upon-Thames	366·6	387·0	413·9	364·2	391·5
Sutton	283·1	254·2	158·8	222·0	259·4
Waltham Forest	510·2	557·6	609·8	629·9	855·0
ILEA	13,637·4	16,151·4	18,470·5	19,569·3	22,010·4
Birmingham	975·8	1,245·0	1,280·3	1,262·6	1,296·3
Coventry	591·5	640·1	526·5	575·5	680·6
Dudley	484·6	342·5	340·3	340·6	488·3
Sandwell	322·2	514·2	515·2	748·2	774·2
Solihull	147·0	148·7	198·0	222·5	215·5
Walsall	329·4	670·6	695·0	844·5	949·9
Wolverhampton	0·0	221·4	196·3	178·4	210·7
Knowsley	921·3	1,200·4	1,136·2	1,192·8	1,313·2
Liverpool	1,518·3	1,887·0	2,021·8	2,158·4	2,475·8
St. Helens	508·7	504·2	546·6	618·1	604·1
Sefton	313·9	294·7	328·8	477·0	455·4
Wirral	1,330·6	1,220·4	1,240·1	1,111·8	1,277·3
Bolton	703·1	696·4	961·3	999·9	1,030·0
Bury	585·1	738·6	660·6	796·2	941·1
Manchester	1,413·0	1,478·7	1,701·5	2,116·8	2,271·4
Oldham	398·1	413·7	605·9	480·9	522·7
Rochdale	442·3	429·0	449·7	474·6	430·2
Salford	670·5	714·2	629·4	644·2	630·7
Stockport	779·9	708·7	722·8	703·4	748·2
Tameside	380·7	379·3	353·4	399·1	388·3
Trafford	172·6	376·6	491·2	491·1	591·7
Wigan	705·6	689·7	1,002·4	1,093·2	980·8
Barnsley	412·8	507·7	492·7	634·9	835·8
Doncaster	505·5	611·6	522·2	562·2	596·5
Rotherham	493·8	509·6	512·2	600·4	739·6
Suffolk	1,626·2	1,651·8	1,879·6	1,923·7	1,918·9
Surrey	1,621·2	1,382·8	1,569·6	1,622·4	1,685·5
Warwickshire	1,209·8	1,224·2	1,228·2	857·8	1,410·8
West Sussex	862·3	733·1	812·6	836·1	801·6
Wiltshire	1,150·6	1,130·9	1,344·6	1,532·2	1,478·3
Clwyd	973·0	1,238·5	1,515·8	1,218·5	1,268·9
Dyfed	1,227·9	1,234·9	1,230·8	1,388·4	1,324·4
Gwent	1,744·2	1,944·8	2,012·4	2,000·6	2,258·6
Gwynedd	714·8	686·1	818·5	926·1	855·7
Mid-Glamorgan	402·4	353·4	331·6	420·9	363·9
Powys	597·1	702·5	575·2	566·1	575·3
South Glamorgan	1,063·0	1,036·4	1,038·3	1,108·7	1,140·3
West Glamorgan	865·0	816·6	804·6	761·7	767·0
England and Wales	127,932·4	136,741·7	146,799·2	160,451·6	171,048·6

[1] Excludes fee payments made to sandwich students in their industrial year.

Teacher Vacancies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a table of full-time teacher vacancies in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools for *(a)* January 1987, *(b)* January 1988 and *(c)* January 1989, broken down by school type and subject area for (i) England and Wales, (ii) the regions and (iii) individual local education authorities, in a manner consistent with the answer given to the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), *Official Report*, 15 February, column *318*.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 26 February 1990]:* The information is given in the tables. Data on primary vacancies were not collected prior to 1988. In 1987 secondary heads and deputies were not identified separately but included within the subject breakdowns. An index to the subject breakdowns used in tables 4 to 6 follows.

Secondary vacancies subject guide

Column heading	*Subject*
H & D	Heads and deputies
Maths	Mathematics
Sci.	Sciences
Lang.	Languages
Engl.	English
H,G,SS	History, geography or social studies
CDT, C or A	Craft design and technology (CDT), craft or art
Music	Music
P.E.	Physical education
Rem.	Remedial
Others	Other subjects

Table 1
Vacancies as a percentage of full-time teachers in post

	1987	*1988*			*1989*		
	Secondary	*Nursery and Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*	*Nursery and Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
Gateshead	0·5	0·5	0·4	0·5	2·0	1·5	1·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	1·4	0·6	0·5	0·5	3·1	1·5	2·3
North Tyneside	1·0	0·4	0·6	0·5	0·0	0·0	0·0
South Tyneside	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sunderland	0·5	0·5	0·4	0·4	0·6	0·4	0·5
Cleveland	0·0	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
Cumbria	1·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·6	0·5	0·6
Durham	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·5	0·1	0·3
Northumberland	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·7	0·3	0·4
North	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·8	0·4	0·6
Barnsley	0·4	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·5	0·1	0·3
Doncaster	0·3	0·7	0·6	0·6	1·1	0·6	0·8
Rotherham	0·1	1·5	0·3	0·9	1·4	1·4	1·4
Sheffield	1·2	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·5	0·2	0·3
Bradford	0·5	0·4	0·3	0·4	1·0	0·4	0·6
Calderdale	0·7	0·9	1·3	1·1	0·6	1·7	1·2
Kirklees	0·9	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·6	1·1	0·9
Leeds	4·0	1·3	1·0	1·1	1·5	0·7	1·0
Wakefield	2·5	4·0	2·3	3·0	3·0	2·4	2·6
Humberside	0·6	0·5	0·3	0·4	0·7	0·2	0·4
North Yorkshire	0·1	1·1	0·8	0·9	1·4	0·5	0·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	0·7	0·9	0·6	0·8	1·1	0·7	0·9
Knowsley	1·1	0·8	1·2	1·0	0·4	0·9	0·6
Liverpool	0·2	0·5	0·1	0·3	0·9	0·0	0·4
St. Helens	0·5	1·1	1·0	1·1	0·4	0·6	0·5
Sefton	0·2	0·5	0·2	0·3	0·1	0·2	0·1
Wirral	1·9	0·9	0·6	0·7	0·6	0·8	0·7
Bolton	0·2	0·8	0·2	0·5	0·9	0·1	0·5
Bury	0·0	0·5	0·0	0·2	1·0	0·9	1·0
Manchester	1·0	0·9	1·4	1·2	1·5	1·3	1·4
Oldham	0·5	1·3	0·3	0·7	0·6	0·1	0·3
Rochdale	0·4	2·0	0·9	1·4	2·7	0·8	1·7
Salford	2·1	2·5	1·9	2·2	3·5	2·1	2·8
Stockport	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·7	0·6	0·6
Tameside	1·4	0·2	0·1	0·2	2·5	1·8	2·1
Trafford	0·2	0·8	0·2	0·5	1·1	0·1	0·6
Wigan	0·0	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·6	0·1	0·3
Cheshire	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·3	0·3	0·3
Lancashire	1·0	1·4	1·2	1·3	2·1	1·6	1·8
North West	0·8	0·9	0·7	0·8	1·2	0·8	1·0
Derbyshire	1·9	1·0	0·9	0·9	1·0	1·0	1·0
Leicestershire	1·5	0·4	1·0	0·7	0·5	0·7	0·6
Lincolnshire	1·3	1·6	1·0	1·3	1·4	1·1	1·2
Northamptonshire	0·2	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·3	0·1	0·2
Nottinghamshire	1·3	1·1	0·9	1·0	1·7	1·0	1·3
East Midlands	0·7	0·8	0·8	0·8	1·0	0·8	0·9
Birmingham	1·7	2·3	1·6	1·9	1·8	2·6	2·2
Coventry	0·9	1·9	0·3	1·0	1·1	0·7	0·9

	1987 Secondary	1988 Nursery and Primary	1988 Secondary	1988 Total	1989 Nursery and Primary	1989 Secondary	1989 Total
Dudley	0·9	2·0	0·4	1·1	3·4	0·5	1·9
Sandwell	0·9	0·9	1·2	1·1	0·8	1·0	0·9
Solihull	1·8	1·6	0·5	1·0	3·2	0·3	3·6
Walsall	1·0	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·2	0·1	0·2
Wolverhampton	1·1	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·8	1·1	1·0
Hereford and Worcester	0·6	0·7	0·9	0·8	0·9	1·1	1·0
Shropshire	0·1	0·8	0·3	0·5	0·5	0·3	0·4
Staffordshire	0·8	1·5	0·6	1·0	0·3	0·9	0·6
Warwickshire	0·7	1·3	0·8	1·1	0·1	1·7	0·8
West Midlands	1·2	1·4	0·3	1·1	1·1	1·2	1·1
Cambridgeshire	0·3	0·9	0·7	0·8	0·9	0·7	0·8
Norfolk	0·8	0·5	0·2	0·4	0·4	0·8	0·6
Suffolk	0·8	0·5	0·9	0·8	0·3	0·8	0·8
East Anglia	0·5	0·7	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·8	0·7

Table 2
Vacancies as a percentage of full-time teachers in post

	1987 Secondary	1988 Nursery and primary	1988 Secondary	1988 Total	1989 Nursery and primary	1989 Secondary	1989 Total
Barking	3·0	6·6	3·5	5·0	6·4	1·6	4·0
Barnet	4·2	3·1	3·7	3·4	3·2	4·4	3·9
Bexley	2·2	1·8	2·1	2·0	1·4	2·4	1·9
Brent	[1]	1·9	2·2	2·0	1·6	1·5	1·6
Bromley	5·0	1·4	1·7	1·6	0·7	0·4	0·6
Croydon	1·4	2·0	0·8	1·3	1·8	1·7	1·7
Ealing	1·6	5·3	2·0	4·3	7·7	2·1	5·5
Enfield	3·1	3·6	2·9	3·2	5·2	2·2	3·6
Haringey	2·3	6·3	3·0	4·8	12·9	3·2	8·5
Harrow	1·5	0·6	2·8	1·5	1·1	1·4	1·2
Havering	2·3	0·1	1·0	0·6	5·2	0·8	2·7
Hillingdon	1·1	3·4	2·7	3·0	3·9	3·1	3·5
Hounslow	0·9	1·2	0·5	0·8	1·9	1·1	1·5
Kingston	1·3	0·9	1·1	1·0	1·6	0·4	0·9
Merton	1·2	2·4	1·0	2·0	4·7	3·7	4·1
Newham	4·8	14·0	4·6	9·1	11·7	4·8	8·2
Redbridge	1·6	2·0	2·5	2·3	3·7	1·2	2·3
Richmond	3·8	1·4	0·9	1·2	0·0	0·2	0·1
Sutton	2·2	2·3	2·3	2·7	2·8	1·2	1·9
Waltham Forest	0·3	[1]	[1]	[1]	6·0	2·6	4·2
ILEA	4·1	4·9	3·3	4·2	6·8	6·2	6·5
South East Greater London[1]	3·6	4·0	2·5	3·2	5·3	3·4	4·3
Bedfordshire	1·5	1·3	1·4	1·4	3·6	2·2	2·8
Berkshire	0·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	2·2	1·3	1·7
Buckinghamshire	2·2	0·3	1·2	1·0	1·6	1·6	1·6
East Sussex	0·7	0·3	0·9	0·6	2·2	1·7	1·9
Essex	0·8	1·3	1·2	1·2	1·1	1·2	1·1
Hampshire	1·0	1·1	0·9	1·0	1·6	1·0	1·3
Hertfordshire	1·0	1·2	1·3	1·2	1·7	1·2	1·4
Isle of Wight	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Kent	1·4	0·9	1·2	1·1	1·8	2·3	2·1
Oxfordshire	0·4	0·3	0·0	0·4	0·1	0·4	0·3
Surrey	1·2	1·4	0·9	1·1	2·8	1·4	2·2
West Sussex	0·9	1·4	1·2	1·3	2·2	1·1	1·7
Other South East	0·9	1·1	1·0	1·1	1·8	1·4	1·6
Avon	1·0	0·6	0·9	0·8	0·5	0·2	0·3
Cornwall	0·8	1·6	0·5	1·0	1·6	1·1	1·4
Devon	1·1	2·1	1·5	1·8	2·0	1·8	1·9
Dorset	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·6	0·0	0·3
Gloucestershire	0·3	0·5	0·2	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
Somerset	0·8	1·3	1·1	1·4	2·5	2·2	2·4
Wiltshire	2·0	1·5	1·1	1·2	1·9	1·5	1·7
South West	1·0	1·2	0·8	1·0	1·2	1·0	1·1
Clwyd	0·1	0·6	0·1	0·3	1·2	0·5	0·8
Dyfed	0·5	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2
Gwent	0·1	3·0	1·2	2·0	2·6	0·8	1·6
Gwynedd	0·7	0·1	0·9	0·6	0·8	1·4	1·1
Mid-Glamorgan	1·2	2·7	1·2	1·9	3·6	1·3	2·4
Powys	0·0	1·2	1·9	1·6	1·0	2·0	1·5

	1987 Secondary	Nursery and primary	1988 Secondary	Total	Nursery and primary	1989 Secondary	Total
South Glamorgan	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·7	0·2	0·5
West Glamorgan	0·7	0·0	0·3	0·2	0·0	0·7	0·4
Wales	1·1	1·2	0·7	0·9	1·5	0·8	1·2
Total England and Wales	1·2	1·4	1·0	1·2	1·8	1·2	1·5

[1] Regional totals include estimated figures in respect of Brent and Waltham Forest LEAs who did not provide vacancies data in 1987 and 1988 respectively.

Table 2

(1) Nursery and Primary Vacancies 1988 (Numbers)

	Nursery	Infant	Junior	More than one group	Total
Gateshead	1	1	2	0	4
Newcastle upon Tyne	0	1	4	1	6
North Tyneside	0	0	0	3	3
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	2	1	0	4	7
Cleveland	1	0	0	2	3
Cumbria	0	1	1	0	2
Durham	0	0	0	0	0
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	0
North	4	4	7	10	25
Barnsley	0	1	2	0	3
Doncaster	0	0	1	7	8
Rotherham	3	3	9	1	16
Sheffield	1	6	1	0	8
Bradford	1	5	1	0	7
Calderdale	1	3	3	0	7
Kirklees	0	1	2	2	5
Leeds	2	3	6	21	32
Wakefield	1	27	8	11	47
Humberside	1	1	9	4	15
North Yorks	3	6	4	12	25
York and Humberside	13	56	46	58	173
Knowsley	1	0	5	0	5
Liverpool	1	6	3	1	11
St. Helen's	0	3	4	1	8
Sefton	0	2	3	0	5
Wirral	0	6	5	1	12
Bolton	0	5	3	0	8
Bury	0	0	0	3	3
Manchester	5	4	3	6	18
Oldham	0	4	5	3	12
Rochdale	0	0	0	18	18
Salford	2	3	5	13	23
Stockport	0	0	0	5	5
Tameside	0	0	2	0	2
Trafford	1	3	2	0	6
Wigan	1	2	0	0	3
Cheshire	2	17	4	0	23
Lancashire	4	18	26	20	68
North West	17	73	70	71	231
Derbyshire	0	17	5	13	35
Leicestershire	0	0	1	11	12
Lincolnshire	0	5	4	22	31
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	2	2
Nottinghamshire	4	17	8	11	40
East Midlands	4	39	18	59	120
Birmingham	6	37	49	9	101
Coventry	1	5	12	5	23
Dudley	2	6	16	0	24
Sandwell	1	5	1	4	11
Solihull	1	3	8	0	12
Walsall	0	2	1	2	5
Wolverhampton	0	2	3	2	7
Hereford and Worcester	0	9	1	3	13
Shropshire	0	1	1	10	12
Staffordshire	3	12	11	26	56
Warwickshire	1	7	9	8	25
West Midlands	15	89	112	69	285

	Nursery	*Infant*	*Junior*	*More than one group*	*Total*
Cambridgeshire	0	12	9	0	21
Norfolk	0	6	6	1	13
Suffolk	1	3	6	0	10
East Anglia	1	21	21	1	44

(2) Nursery and primary vacancies 1988 (numbers)

	Nursery	*Infant*	*Junior*	*More than one group*	*Total*
Barking	5	22	15	0	42
Barnet	2	15	14	1	32
Bexley	0	4	1	8	13
Brent	2	11	9	0	22
Bromley	0	8	4	0	12
Croydon	0	10	12	0	22
Ealing	1	35	16	21	73
Enfield	0	12	19	2	33
Haringey	8	28	13	9	58
Harrow	0	0	5	0	5
Havering	0	1	0	0	1
Hillingdon	3	19	5	0	27
Hounslow	2	2	4	2	10
Kingston	0	1	1	2	4
Merton	3	4	2	1	10
Newham	17	55	73	0	145
Redbridge	1	6	6	1	14
Richmond	0	1	3	2	6
Sutton	3	2	10	0	15
ILEA	30	145	185	79	439
South East Greater London[1]	77	383	399	129	988
Bedfordshire	8	5	6	4	23
Berkshire	1	16	7	0	24
Buckinghamshire	0	7	5	7	19
East Sussex	0	1	4	0	5
Essex	1	22	31	11	65
Hampshire	1	21	25	11	58
Hertfordshire	2	17	14	8	41
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	2	10	11	18	41
Oxfordshire	0	6	9	0	15
Surrey	0	11	34	0	45
West Sussex	0	14	13	2	29
Other South East	15	130	159	61	365
Avon	1	10	4	4	19
Cornwall	1	10	9	5	25
Devon	1	11	44	8	64
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	2	1	6	9
Somerset	0	10	3	12	25
Wiltshire	0	4	5	18	27
South West	3	47	66	53	169
Clwyd	0	0	0	8	8
Dyfed	0	1	5	0	6
Gwent	1	13	24	14	52
Gwynedd	0	0	1	0	1
Mid-Glamorgan	5	25	36	3	69
Powys	0	2	1	3	6
South Glamorgan	0	1	0	1	2
West Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	6	42	67	29	144
Total England and Wales[1]	155	884	965	540	2,544

[1] Regional and national totals include estimated figures in respect of Waltham Forest LEA who did not provide vacancies data for this year.

Table 3

(1) Nursery and Primary vacancies 1989 (numbers)

	Nursery	*Infant*	*Junior*	*More than one group*	*Total*
Gateshead	0	1	3	13	17
Newcastle upon Tyne	5	5	4	18	32
North Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	0	2	6	8
Cleveland	2	2	0	2	6
Cumbria	1	3	3	4	11
Durham	2	2	3	5	12
Northumberland	0	4	0	2	6
North	10	17	15	50	92
Barnsley	0	3	0	1	4
Doncaster	1	2	0	11	14
Rotherham	0	4	6	5	15
Sheffield	2	4	3	0	9
Bradford	2	4	0	11	17
Calderdale	0	0	4	1	5
Kirklees	0	4	1	4	9
Leeds	0	2	3	32	37
Wakefield	2	15	11	7	35
Humberside	0	14	6	2	22
North Yorkshire	1	11	8	13	33
Yorkshire and Humberside	8	63	42	87	200
Knowsley	1	0	2	0	3
Liverpool	0	14	3	2	19
St. Helens	0	1	2	0	3
Sefton	1	0	0	0	1
Wirral	0	4	4	0	8
Bolton	1	5	4	0	10
Bury	0	3	0	4	7
Manchester	4	5	2	19	30
Oldham	0	5	1	0	6
Rochdale	0	0	0	24	24
Salford	0	15	13	8	36
Stockport	0	3	4	0	7
Tameside	1	11	6	3	21
Trafford	0	3	3	2	8
Wigan	0	1	4	3	8
Cheshire	1	10	0	0	11
Lancashire	7	34	37	27	105
North West	16	114	85	92	307
Derbyshire	5	8	11	11	35
Leicestershire	3	3	4	6	16
Lincolnshire	0	3	3	21	27
Northamptonshire	0	3	3	0	6
Nottinghamshire	3	11	29	18	61
East Midlands	11	26	50	56	145
Birmingham	5	24	50	2	81
Coventry	1	6	5	2	14
Dudley	2	20	18	2	42
Sandwell	0	2	3	5	10
Solihull	1	13	5	5	24
Walsall	0	0	0	3	3
Wolverhampton	1	2	2	5	10
Hereford and Worcester	1	12	0	5	18
Shropshire	1	1	2	4	8
Staffordshire	0	2	6	2	10
Warwickshire	0	0	1	1	2
West Midlands	12	82	92	36	222
Cambridgeshire	1	6	8	7	22
Norfolk	0	2	7	2	11
Suffolk	0	3	7	4	14
East Anglia	1	11	22	13	47

(2) Nursery and Primary Vacancies 1989 (Numbers)

	Nursery	Infant	Junior	More than one group	Total
Barking	2	13	17	9	41
Barnet	1	14	17	0	32
Bexley	0	4	6	0	10
Brent	5	6	3	4	18
Bromley	0	2	3	1	6
Croydon	0	7	13	0	20
Ealing	1	31	35	31	98
Enfield	1	23	25	0	49
Haringey	18	41	46	1	106
Harrow	0	4	4	0	8
Havering	0	16	7	19	42
Hillingdon	2	16	13	0	31
Hounslow	2	6	6	1	15
Kingston	0	3	3	1	7
Merton	3	9	4	5	21
Newham	23	48	65	0	136
Redbridge	0	9	15	2	26
Richmond	0	0	0	0	0
Sutton	0	3	3	7	13
Waltham Forest	5	16	16	13	50
ILEA	45	208	218	105	576
South East Greater London	108	479	519	199	1,305
Bedfordshire	14	28	10	10	62
Berkshire	3	22	10	19	54
Buckinghamshire	1	14	16	9	40
East Sussex	0	16	23	0	39
Essex	0	9	16	29	54
Hampshire	0	32	39	13	84
Hertfordshire	4	24	21	11	60
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	1	23	39	21	84
Oxfordshire	0	2	0	0	2
Surrey	3	33	48	7	91
West Sussex	0	20	5	22	47
Other South East	26	223	227	141	617
Avon	0	7	4	3	14
Cornwall	1	8	16	1	26
Devon	1	19	27	13	60
Dorset	0	6	4	0	10
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	0	7	2	26	35
Wiltshire	0	12	5	19	36
South West	2	59	58	62	181
Clwyd	1	5	2	9	17
Dyfed	0	1	3	0	4
Gwent	1	8	14	23	46
Gwynedd	0	0	0	8	8
Mid-Glamorgan	0	29	26	35	90
Powys	0	2	1	2	5
South Glamorgan	1	1	3	6	11
West Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	3	46	49	83	181
Total England and Wales	197	1,122	1,159	819	3,297

(i) Table 4
Secondary Vacancies 1987 (Numbers)

	Maths	Sci	Lang	Engl	H.G.SS	CDt. C&A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Gateshead	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1	4	0	1	4	0	0	1	2	6	19
North Tyneside	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	2	1	2	12
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	2	3	0	0	1	1	0	[illegible]	0	0	8
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	1	2	3	2	3	3	1	0	0	7	22
Durham	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5

	Maths	Sci	Lang	Engl	H.G.SS	CDt. C&A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North	7	15	4	5	10	4	1	4	3	18	71
Barnsley	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
Doncaster	0	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	11
Rotherham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sheffield	4	2	4	4	3	2	1	0	3	5	28
Bradford	1	5	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	5	14
Calderdale	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	7
Kirklees	2	3	0	3	0	1	1	2	0	5	17
Leeds	12	22	12	15	12	11	8	21	14	27	154
Wakefield	5	4	1	6	2	0	0	4	1	17	40
Humberside	5	3	2	2	2	5	1	2	1	5	28
North Yorkshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Yorkshire and Humberside	30	44	23	34	21	20	13	32	20	70	307
Knowsley	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	10
Liverpool	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	5
St. Helens	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Sefton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Wirral	4	3	2	5	3	3	1	1	1	4	27
Bolton	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Bury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manchester	2	7	2	3	0	1	2	0	1	5	23
Oldham	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
Rochdale	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
Salford	3	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	0	7	23
Stockport	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	7
Tameside	4	5	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	15
Trafford	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Wigan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	2	4	3	3	0	8	3	1	1	6	31
Lancashire	9	7	5	4	7	8	2	1	0	14	57
North West	35	35	20	18	15	26	14	9	4	43	219
Derbyshire	7	7	3	9	3	9	2	8	3	28	79
Leicestershire	4	8	7	7	5	6	0	5	0	19	61
Lincolnshire	1	6	4	4	1	3	1	3	1	5	29
Northamptonshire	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	7
Nottinghamshire	8	5	5	7	6	4	6	6	1	11	59
East Midlands	21	28	20	27	16	24	9	22	5	63	235
Birmingham	10	4	7	8	4	6	4	5	1	30	79
Coventry	3	1	2	2	3	0	1	0	0	2	14
Dudley	1	2	1	1	3	0	1	1	1	2	13
Sandwell	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	1	7	14
Solihull	2	3	2	3	3	1	0	1	0	3	18
Walsall	0	1	0	1	2	1	3	2	0	5	15
Wolverhampton	1	3	0	4	1	1	2	1	0	2	15
Hereford and Worcester	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	3	19
Shropshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Staffordshire	7	4	2	1	3	1	2	9	0	9	38
Warwickshire	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	12
West Midlands	28	22	18	23	21	13	17	22	7	68	239
Cambridgeshire	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	1	8
Norfolk	1	3	4	3	5	1	0	0	0	4	21
Suffolk	4	3	3	4	2	2	1	1	1	3	24
East Anglia	5	7	7	8	8	3	1	5	1	8	53

Secondary Vacancies 1987 (Numbers)

	Maths	Science	Language	English	N.G.SS	CDT. C and A	Music	P.E.	Remedial	Others	Total
Barking	5	2	0	0	0	3	1	3	2	3	19
Barnet	4	9	2	3	7	3	1	6	1	14	50
Bexley	2	4	1	4	1	1	0	2	0	6	21
Bromley	4	7	1	9	5	7	0	6	1	12	52
Croydon	2	3	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	17
Ealing	6	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	14

	Maths	Science	Language	English	N.G.SS	CDT. C and A	Music	P.E.	Remedial	Others	Total
Enfield	6	5	3	2	4	3	0	2	0	10	35
Haringey	3	6	0	1	1	3	0	2	1	2	19
Harrow	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	3	10
Havering	3	2	2	6	2	2	1	2	0	7	27
Hillingdon	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	10
Hounslow	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	8
Kingston	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	7
Merton	0	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	9
Newham	9	9	4	5	5	5	1	4	1	13	56
Redbridge	3	3	0	3	0	2	0	0	1	2	14
Richmond	1	4	1	0	1	4	0	2	1	2	16
Sutton	3	3	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	14
Waltham Forest	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4
ILEA	30	48	20	36	42	43	15	22	26	99	381
South East Greater London[1]	90	117	46	83	76	90	21	58	35	197	813
Bedfordshire	8	3	4	1	3	3	1	6	0	9	38
Berkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Buckinghamshire	5	9	4	0	1	4	6	3	1	16	49
East Sussex	3	2	0	2	1	3	1	0	1	3	16
Essex	9	4	1	7	5	4	1	5	4	10	50
Hampshire	8	9	2	1	2	9	2	2	4	18	57
Hertfordshire	7	3	5	2	4	7	2	7	1	6	44
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	21	14	6	12	9	13	2	3	2	9	91
Oxfordshire	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	8
Surrey	5	8	5	5	1	4	2	2	0	4	36
West Sussex	4	4	0	1	0	4	0	1	2	7	23
Other South East	71	57	28	31	28	52	17	29	16	83	412
Avon	4	7	4	0	4	2	3	3	3	5	35
Cornwall	1	3	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	7	18
Devon	4	3	6	2	5	5	2	3	1	10	41
Dorset	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Gloucestershire	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Somerset	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	0	2	2	14
Wiltshire	10	10	2	1	1	3	1	2	5	7	42
South West	23	27	15	9	13	11	8	8	13	32	159
Clwyd	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Dyfed	0	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	8
Gwent	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Gwynedd	2	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	9
Mid-Glamorgan	2	5	3	3	2	2	2	1	5	9	34
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Glamorgan	0	0	3	3	2	0	0	1	0	4	13
Wales	7	10	8	10	5	2	3	3	6	15	69
Total England and Wales[1]	317	362	189	248	213	245	104	192	110	597	2,577

[1] Regional and national totals include estimated figures in respect of Brent LEA who did not provide vacancies data for this year.

Table 5

(1) *Secondary vacancies 1988 (Numbers)*

	H & D	Maths	Sci.	Lang.	Engl.	H.G. SS	CDT C & A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Gateshead	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	4
Newcastle upon Tyne	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	6
North Tyneside	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	7
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	5
Cleveland	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4
Cumbria	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Durham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North	4	4	2	4	2	1	2	3	1	7	2	32
Barnsley	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2

(1) Secondary vacancies 1988 (Numbers)

	H & D	Maths	Sci.	Lang.	Engl.	H.G. SS	CDT C & A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Doncaster	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	8
Rotherham	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	4
Sheffied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	6
Bradford	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	9
Calderdale	2	1	1	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	12
Kirklees	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	7
Leeds	2	5	1	5	2	5	0	2	2	5	6	35
Wakefield	4	2	0	4	3	2	3	4	0	10	3	35
Humberside	2	3	0	2	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	12
North Yorkshire	2	3	3	0	0	1	2	4	1	5	2	23
York and Humberside	14	18	6	17	11	10	8	11	6	36	16	153
Knowsley	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	10
Liverpool	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
St. Helens	0	2	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	2	10
Sefton	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Wirral	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	8
Bolton	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
Bury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machester	3	4	3	5	1	0	1	2	2	9	0	30
Oldham	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
Rochdale	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	11
Salford	3	2	1	1	1	4	0	1	2	3	2	20
Stockport	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6
Tameside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Trafford	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Wigan	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	5
Cheshire	1	6	2	1	2	4	1	2	1	8	3	31
Lancashire	7	13	10	8	3	5	0	4	1	12	5	68
North West	21	33	21	19	11	16	6	16	7	41	22	213
Derbyshire	3	3	0	6	5	2	3	3	0	5	7	37
Leicestershire	3	6	4	0	4	3	3	2	2	9	2	38
Lincolnshire	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	3	5	23
Northamptonshire	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Nottinghamshire	1	2	3	5	2	1	4	6	2	11	6	43
East Midlands	10	15	9	15	14	7	12	12	4	28	20	146
Birmingham	2	7	5	9	6	2	3	2	7	21	9	73
Coventry	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Dudley	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
Sandwell	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	2	11	0	18
Solihull	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5
Walsall	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	6
Wolverhampton	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	8
Hereford and Worcester	3	3	4	2	3	1	1	4	0	3	2	26
Shropshire	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
Staffordshire	4	2	10	4	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	29
Warwickshire	0	3	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	3	1	14
West Midlands	11	20	26	23	11	5	6	18	13	47	13	193
Cambridgeshire	3	2	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	17
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Suffolk	0	2	2	1	1	1	2	5	3	7	2	26
East Anglia	3	4	3	2	3	4	6	7	4	9	4	49

(2) Secondary vacancies 1988 (numbers)

	H and D	Maths	Science	Lang.	English	H.G. SS	CDT. C and A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Barking	2	3	1	6	2	0	1	4	0	3	0	22
Barnet	5	11	2	3	2	4	1	2	1	14	0	45
Bexley	1	5	1	1	1	3	1	1	0	5	0	19
Brent	2	3	3	4	3	0	0	0	1	3	5	24
Bromley	2	2	0	3	2	1	0	1	0	3	3	17
Croydon	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	9
Ealing	1	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	6	0	17
Enfield	8	5	0	2	2	4	0	1	1	10	0	33
Haringey	1	5	1	2	1	3	0	1	1	8	1	24

	H and D	Maths	Science	Lang.	English	H.G. SS	CDT. C and A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Harrow	2	0	2	2	1	6	0	0	0	2	0	15
Havering	3	1	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	11
Hillingdon	2	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	0	5	0	24
Hounslow	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	4
Kingston	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	6
Merton	0	0	1	3	1	3	0	1	2	2	0	13
Newham	5	8	4	5	3	7	2	5	0	12	2	53
Redbridge	4	5	1	1	2	3	0	2	0	3	0	21
Richmond	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4
Sutton	2	6	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	15
ILEA	29	22	15	15	23	34	11	18	17	75	21	280
[1]South East Greater London	71	90	39	57	49	73	19	39	27	157	39	660
Bedfordshire	6	9	4	3	2	3	0	1	0	4	5	37
[redacted]shire	1	4	0	5	6	5	0	0	1	5	2	29
Buckinghamshire	2	2	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	6	8	26
East Sussex	3	3	1	2	1	3	2	0	1	3	0	19
Essex	8	14	8	5	7	3	2	2	3	13	4	69
Hampshire	9	5	3	10	3	3	2	3	1	9	0	48
Hertfordshire	9	4	6	5	3	3	5	3	0	13	3	54
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	15	11	3	11	3	7	4	7	0	9	5	75
Oxfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surrey	2	5	0	3	6	0	1	3	0	5	0	25
West Sussex	1	6	3	2	1	4	0	0	1	5	4	27
Other South East	56	63	32	49	33	31	16	19	7	72	31	409
Avon	2	0	2	3	2	3	3	3	0	4	8	30
Cornwall	1	0	0	5	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	10
Devon	6	7	4	3	4	2	5	5	1	12	3	52
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	5
Somerset	1	4	4	3	2	2	0	1	3	0	0	20
Wiltshire	5	4	1	3	0	3	0	2	1	3	1	23
South West	15	16	12	18	9	12	8	12	5	20	13	140
Clwyd	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Dyfed	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	4
Gwent	0	3	3	5	0	4	1	0	1	4	4	25
Gwynedd	3	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	11
Mid-Glamorgan	3	6	5	5	4	2	0	2	3	2	0	32
Powys	0	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	11
South Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
West Glamorgan	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
Wales	6	14	14	14	5	11	2	3	5	13	4	91
[1]Total England and Wales	211	277	164	218	148	170	85	140	79	430	164	2,086

[1] Regional and national totals include estimated figures in respect of Waltham Forest LEA who did not provide vacancies data for this year.

Table 6
Secondary vacancies 1989 (numbers)

(1)

	H and D	Maths	Science	Lang.	English	H.G.SS.	CDT. C and A	Music	P.E.	Rem.	Others	Total
Gateshead	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	7	0	14
Newcastle upon Tyne	1	0	1	2	4	1	2	0	1	3	2	18
North Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	5
Cleveland	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6
Cumbria	0	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	11
Durham	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Northumberland	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	5
North	3	10	6	5	5	2	3	3	2	16	7	62
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

	H and D	Maths	Science	Lang.	English	H.G.SS.	CDT. C and A	Music	P.E	Rem.	Others	Total
Doncaster	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	8
Rotherham	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	4	1	17
Sheffield	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
Bradford	1	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	11
Calderdale	0	2	0	1	2	3	2	2	0	2	1	15
Kirklees	0	2	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	7	6	21
Leeds	1	1	1	2	1	0	3	1	0	5	9	24
Wakefield	1	3	3	4	8	2	1	4	0	6	3	35
Humberside	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	2	0	7
North Yorkshire	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	4	2	13
Yorkshire and Humberside	7	14	9	15	14	12	11	12	2	34	25	155
Knowsley	1	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	7
Liverpool	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
St. Helens	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Sefton	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Wirral	2	3	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	11
Bolton	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bury	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	0	7
Manchester	1	3	2	2	1	2	0	3	1	4	6	25
Oldham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Rochdale	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	9
Salford	2	3	2	3	2	1	0	0	0	9	0	22
Stockport	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	7
Tameside	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	12	17
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Wigan	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cheshire	1	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	1	13
Lanchashire	8	7	9	15	6	9	2	5	6	9	12	88
North West	20	33	18	26	12	16	8	13	8	30	35	219
Derbyshire	2	2	7	2	5	0	1	3	8	7	4	41
Liecestershire	3	4	3	1	4	2	0	1	0	6	4	28
Lincolnshire	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	0	1	4	25
Northamptonshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	4
Nottinghamshire	4	5	4	7	3	2	4	3	2	7	6	47
East Midlands	12	15	17	13	14	6	7	9	10	23	17	145
Birmingham	10	9	5	14	1	5	0	6	0	31	26	107
Coventry	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	10
Dudley	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	6
Sandwell	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	0	15
Solihull	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Walsall	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wolverhampton	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	6	3	14
Hereford and Worcester	5	6	3	4	1	3	0	4	0	6	0	32
Shropshire	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Staffordshire	7	8	7	0	5	2	2	3	0	5	1	40
Warwickshire	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	3	20	29
West Midlands	26	27	25	23	8	12	6	21	3	59	52	262
Cambridgeshire	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	4	3	3	17
Norfolk	2	2	1	0	4	1	2	1	1	5	1	20
Suffolk	1	4	1	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	1	22
East Anglia	4	6	2	2	5	2	7	6	8	12	5	59

agesages

Secondary vacancies 1989 (numbers)

	H. and D.	Maths.	Science	Languages	English	E. G. SS	CDT. C&A	Music	P.E.	Remedial	Others	Total
Barking	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	1	3	0	10
Barnet	1	10	6	5	5	5	1	2	0	14	4	53
Bexley	2	3	2	3	2	2	0	0	1	5	1	21
Brent	0	2	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	3	3	14
Bromley	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Croydon	3	7	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	6	1	19
Ealing	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	7	2	18
Enfield	7	5	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	6	0	23
Haringey	1	3	1	3	1	3	3	3	1	2	1	22

	H and D	Maths	Science	Languages	English	E G SS	CDT C&A	Music	P E	Remedial	Others	Total
Harrow	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	8
Havering	0	1	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	9
Hillingdon	6	2	4	5	2	2	0	1	1	4	0	27
Hounslow	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	3	9
Kingston	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Merton	2	2	1	2	7	3	0	2	3	3	1	26
Newham	4	10	6	4	3	6	1	3	5	13	3	58
Redbridge	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	10
Richmond	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sutton	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	8
Waltham Forest	2	0	5	4	2	6	1	2	1	1	1	25
ILEA	50	62	53	53	32	27	16	32	20	82	25	452
SE Gt. London	89	111	86	89	62	64	29	53	34	157	45	819
Bedfordshire	10	11	3	2	4	7	1	8	0	5	4	55
Berkshire	5	3	2	4	2	5	1	1	0	11	3	37
Buckinghamshire	4	2	5	4	3	1	2	2	2	1	7	33
East Sussex	7	2	5	3	3	4	3	1	4	3	0	35
Essex	7	11	9	7	6	7	1	6	1	8	6	69
Hampshire	7	5	5	5	3	5	1	2	3	8	6	50
Hertfordshire	4	7	8	6	1	3	2	2	1	9	6	49
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	22	16	6	13	16	12	9	7	6	18	15	140
Oxfordshire	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	4	7
Surrey	6	5	6	3	3	5	2	4	0	6	0	40
West Sussex	5	2	7	2	2	1	1	0	1	3	3	27
Other South East	77	64	56	49	45	50	24	33	18	72	54	542
Avon	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	7
Cornwall	3	1	7	3	0	0	0	1	1	4	1	21
Devon	5	5	9	6	3	2	2	3	1	23	3	62
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	5	5	5	5	2	3	3	6	0	4	0	38
Wiltshire	4	3	1	5	0	3	1	1	2	10	2	32
South West	17	15	23	19	5	8	6	12	4	41	11	161
Clwyd	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	9
Dyfed	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Gwent	0	2	3	1	2	2	0	0	0	3	2	15
Gwynedd	2	3	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	3	2	16
Mid-Glamorgan	1	4	4	5	5	3	0	3	0	8	2	35
Powys	1	1	4	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	11
South Glamorgan	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4
West Glamorgan	1	1	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	12
Wales	8	15	19	12	10	8	2	3	1	16	11	105
Total England and Wales	263	310	261	253	180	180	103	156	90	360	264	2,529

ENERGY

Atomic Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with officials of the European Atomic Energy Agency in advance of the setting of the safeguards budget set out in chapter 71 of the *Official Journal of the European Communities*, volume 33.

Mr. Baldry: The established procedures involving both the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament provide ample opportunity for consultation on all aspects of the EC budget, including safeguards.

Nuclear Electric

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the reason for the allocation to Nuclear Electric of sites at Pembroke, Druridge bay, Denver, and the Maentwrog hydroelectric station in north Wales.

Mr. Baldry: Under section 66 of the Electricity Act 1989, the CEGB is required to make a scheme for the allocation of all its assets to its successor companies. The scheme, presently being prepared by the CEGB, will include unused sites.

I am advised that only part of the site at Pembroke is to be allocated to Nuclear Electric. Maentwrog hydro-electric station is to be allocated to Nuclear Electric for operational reasons associated with the use of cooling water from the adjacent reservoir of Trawsfynydd power station.

Nuclear Waste Transport

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to ensure that no foreign nuclear waste or spent fuel is transported through Leeds; and if he will make it his policy to prohibit the import of foreign nuclear waste or spent fuel into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: The movement of all radioactive materials must be made in compliance with national and international regulations which require safety both in

normal operations and in the event of any transport accident. Safety does not depend on the choice of route used, which is a matter for the carrier.

Nuclear wastes are not imported into the United Kingdom. As regards the import of spent fuel, I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member on 26 February 1990 at column *98*.

Energy Conservation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what amount of the energy conservation budget he allocates to the promotion of competition in the market for production of methods of conserving energy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The market in energy efficiency goods and services is already highly competitive. Hence the Energy Efficiency Office does not allocate funds for the specific purpose of promoting competition.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *457*, when he wrote to the Electricity Council and the Central Electricity Generating Board drawing the question to their attention.

Mr. Wakeham: An official from my Department wrote to the Electricity Council and the CEGB on 5 February 1990.

Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy which stations have been fitted with low-sulphur electrostatic precipitators and for what reasons.

Mr. Wakeham: I am advised that all National Power and PowerGen coal fired power stations have electrostatic precipitators fitted which enable their plant to burn a proportion of low-sulphur coal.

The CEGB have been working for many years with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on a programme to enhance the performance of their precipitators. This programme is being continued by National Power and PowerGen.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), *Official Report*, 26 February, column 96, he will publish the dates and places for the planned regional CHP marketing to which he refers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is a preliminary and provisional list of planned CHP marketing events.

Year 1990-91

Month	*Region*
May	Yorkshire and North West
June	Scotland and West Midlands
July	South East
September	Scotland and South West
October	South West and Not Decided
November	Yorkshire and Not Decided
December	West Midlands
January	Wales
February	South East

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total in megawatts capacity of renewable sources of energy, under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Baldry: Bids from sponsors of renewables-sourced generating projects for contracting under the non-fossil fuel obligation amount to between 1 and 2 GW of capacity. However, the level of the obligation in respect of renewables will not be determined until it is clear, in the light of consultations, how many of these projects are ready to go forward.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land (Access Rights)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General how many representations he has received on the issue of the non-existence of general rights of access to neighbouring land.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor receives approximately 40 representations each year from the public and members of Parliament on the subject of rights of access to neighbouring land.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General if he intends to implement the findings of the Law Commission published in December 1985 on the rights of access to neighbouring land in Law Commission paper No. 151.

The Attorney-General: The Government have accepted the recommendations of the Law Commission in its report on rights of access to neighbouring land. It is intended to implement them when resources and parliamentary time allow.

Law Commission

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the reports published by the Law Commission for each year since 1979, indicating whether any recommendations in each report have been implemented.

The Attorney-General: Appendix 3 to the "Law Commission's Twenty-fourth Annual Report for 1989" (Law Com. No. 190), published on 28 February 1990, contains a complete list of all the commission's reports, including those published since 1979 to date. The right-hand column of appendix 3 shows the extent to which the recommendations in each report have been implemented by legislation.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the costs incurred by the Law Commission for each year since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The figures for the cost of the Law Commission prior to November 1982 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Law Commission has published a table showing the cost of the commission in each annual report since its 18th annual report for 1982-83. The figures are as follows:

	£
1982-1983	1,819,600
1983-1984	1,889,800
1984-1985	1,886,200
1985-1986	1,986,600
1986-1987	2,062,300
1987-1988	2,034,600
1988	2,123,500
1989	2,248,200

Notes:

1. The first six of these figures relate to the period from 1st November in one year to 31st October in the following year. The figures for 1988 and 1989 are for the calendar years.
2. Each of these figures includes an element for the cost incurred by the Lord Chancellor's Department in the administration of the Law Commission.
3. These figures do not include the salary of the chairman of the Law Commission who, as a High Court judge, is paid directly out of the Consolidated Fund.
4. The cost for 1984-85 is the amended figure given in the annual report for 1985-86, and excludes the pensions of former Law Commissioners. They are also excluded from the figures for subsequent years. They are however included in the figures for 1982-83 and 1983-84.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Africa

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing the flow of gains and losses in income for Africa, taking account of development assistance, private lending, debt service payments and commodity price changes, for each year since 1985 to the current year.

Mr. Waldegrave: Figures for the whole of Africa are not available, as north Africa and the middle east are treated as a single region by the main organisations compiling such data. Figures for sub-Saharan Africa are as follows:

A. Net resource flows[1]

	$ billion			
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Official development finance[2]	12·1	15·4	18·1	20·4
Export credits	1·1	−0·1	−0·2	0·6
Private flows[3]	1·6	4·2	4·0	4·2
Total net resource flows	14·8	19·5	21·9	25·2
Interest payments[4]	2·9	2·6	3·1	3·5
Net financial transfer	11·9	16·9	18·8	21·7

Source: OECD: 1988 survey of financing and external debt of developing countries.

B. Trade[5]

	$ billion			
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Exports	31·9	28·3	28·5	n/a
Imports	28·0	29·2	32·5	n/a

Source: World Bank World Development Reports, 1987, 1988, 1989.

[1] Total gross resource flows less capital repayments.

[2] Bilateral and multilateral official development assistance (ODA), plus other official development finance.

[3] International bank lending, direct investment, grants by non-governmental organisations, plus other private investment.

[4] Interest payments on long- and short-term credit (but not including capital repayments).

[5] Includes intra-regional trade.

All figures exclude South Africa which is not regarded by OECD as a developing country.

COCOM

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent COCOM meeting.

Mr. Waldegrave: The COCOM executive committee met on 14 and 15 February. It noted that the political and military environment for which the COCOM controls were devised is changing, and agreed to adapt COCOM's procedures and to accelerate streamlining of the controls, particularly in the sectors of machine tools, telecommunications and computers.

The executive committee agreed that the time limits for consideration of cases submitted to COCOM should be reduced from 12 weeks to eight weeks; that working groups should prepare recommendations for liberalisation of the controls on machine tools, telecommunications and computers to be ready by the next COCOM policy meeting in June 1990; that that meeting would consider further priority sectors for changes to the controls; and that, separately, considerations would be given to whether relaxation could be introduced in return for reassurances against the diversion of strategically sensitive goods and technologies.

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Overseas Development Administration's future funding of the Liverpool school of tropical medicine.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the authorities of the Liverpool school have been told, we are prepared to make a substantial increase in the level of financial support which the school receives from the aid programme. Its provision is subject to an agreement with the school on a set of work programmes to replace the present system of providing aid finance to cover the costs of the salaries of specific individuals and of specific units in the school.

The work programmes are being designed by the school and will aim to make maximum use of their capacity to help address key health issues and problems in developing countries.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, *Official Report*, 28 February, column *210*, he will set out the dates on which the European Political Co-operation Committee's working group on nuclear non-proliferation met in each year since 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: The working group on non-proliferation met on the following dates:

7-8 February 1985
9-10 May 1985
15-16 October 1985
7-8 November 1985

26-27 March1986
17-18 June 1986
8-9 September 1986
6-7 November 1986

5-6 February 1987
21-22 May 1987
10-11 September 1987
18-19 November 1987

18-19 February 1988
19-20 May 1988
14 September 1988
12 December 1988

16 February 1989
26 May 1989
8 September 1989
15 December 1989

31 January-1 February 1990

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, *Official Report*, 28 February, column *210*, on grant in aid provision for non-proliferation matters, he will set out the specific purposes to which he refers for which funding has been made available to the programme for promoting nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Waldegrave: Funding has been made available to the programme for promoting nuclear non-proliferation (PPNN) to meet part of the cost of a conference on issues likely to arise during the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference, and to assist with the production of documentation on the non-proliferation regime.

UN Fund (Women)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations development fund for women in real and monetary terms, for every year since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom contributions to UN Development Fund for Women[1] 1975-1988

£ thousand

Year	In current prices	In constant 1988 prices
1975	10	32
1976	200	560
1977	—	—
1978	—	—
1979	200	386
1980	200	323
1981	—	—
1982	—	—
1983	—	—
1984	—	—
1985	100	116
1986	50	56
1987	50	53
1988	50	50
[2]1989	50	47

[1] Before to 1986 known as the Voluntary Fund for UN Decade for Women.
[2] Provisional.

Women Staff

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply on 13 February, *Official Report*, column *131*, if he will give a breakdown of the jobs held by the 18 per cent. of overseas Overseas Development Administration staff who are women; and what percentage of technical specialists working for the Overseas Development Administration overseas, and what percentage of agriculturalists, are women.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development's reply of 13 February noted that currently there are nine women members of the ODA serving overseas. They occupy the following positions:

British Development Division in the Caribbean:
Senior Economic Assistant
Executive Officer

British Development Division in Eastern Africa:
Senior Economic Assistant

British Development Division in Southern Africa:
Head of Division (Grade 5)
Senior Health and Population Adviser
Senior Economic Assistant

British Development Division in the Pacific:
Head of Division (Grade 5)
Executive Officer

South East Asia Development Division:
Higher Executive Officer

Twenty-eight of the ODA's own staff overseas are technical specialists of whom four are women (14·3 per cent.). Within this group there are eight ODA agricultural specialists; none are women. One woman natural resources adviser from the ODA is currently on secondment to a technical co-operation assignment in Bangladesh.

Overseas Projects (Women Beneficiaries)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number and percentage of overseas projects supported by the Overseas Development Administration in which 50 per cent. of intended beneficiaries are women.

Mr. Maude: Assuming that the project area has a normal gender balance, about 50 per cent. of the beneficiaries, either directly or indirectly, of most overseas projects are women. The Overseas Development Administration has an integrated policy on women in development which takes account of the role of women in all aid activities.

The ODA will be introducing the new statistical reporting system of OECD for women in development in 1990. This system has rigorous criteria for classifying projects which assist women but even this will not provide the data necessary to give a precise answer to this question.

Training Programmes (Women Participants)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number and percentage of women participating in the Overseas Development Administration training programmes in developing countries, in the United Kingdom, and in total, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Maude: Gender-differentiated statistics on training in the United Kingdom under the aid programme are readily available from 1986 only. They show:

Students and Trainees Financed in United Kingdom 1986-88

	Total	Allocable by sex		
		Total	of which women	Per cent. women
Financed During:				
1986	11,534	11,070	1,816	16·4
1987	13,144	13,144	2,373	18·1
1988	13,541	13,541	2,480	18·3

Equivalent data are not available for training provided in developing countries. From limited information for 1988-89, the proportion of women receiving in-country training appears to be significantly greater than the proportion receiving training in the United Kingdom under the aid programme.

Ethiopia

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the fall of the port of Massawa, Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to use the distribution network of the Relief Society of Tigray to distribute famine relief in those areas of Ethiopia under rebel control.

Mr. Waldegrave: The fall of the port of Massawa is a serious blow to the relief effort and donors, including ourselves, are urgently considering the scope for maintaining and increasing the flow of relief supplies through all available channels.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *404*, if he will provide a breakdown by country, type and quantity of the ivory exported from Hong Kong since 1 June 1989.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 22 February 1990]:* Between 1 June 1989 and 14 January 1990 the Hong Kong authorities issued licences for the export of ivory as follows:

Country	*Raw ivory (tonnes)*	*Worked ivory (tonnes)*
China	12·56	—
Macau	0·42	—
India	0·06	—
Taiwan	5·12	0·87
Singapore	6·11	0·11
Japan	26·36	—
Korea	—	0·02
Spain	—	3·56
Mexico	—	0·17
TOTAL	50·63	4·73

Licences were also granted for exports to the Federal Republic of Germany and Thailand but have not yet been used. They have therefore been deleted from the above summary.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *308*, how much ivory has now been exported from Hong Kong since he announced the six-month exemption.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 22 February 1990]*: Two hundred and twenty-five kilogrammes of worked ivory have been exported between 17 January and 26 February. Destinations were South Korea (208 kg) and Taiwan (17 kg).

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *326*, when he expects the entire commercial stocks of ivory in Hong Kong to be entered into the computer system.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 22 February 1990]*: Mid-March 1990.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *404*, if he will provide a breakdown by country of origin of the seizures made by the Hong Kong authorities of elephant ivory and rhino horn.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 22 February 1990]*: The Hong Kong authorities have not been able to determine the countries of origin of confiscated ivory and rhino horn. The only indication from shipping documentation is of the immediately previous country of export from which consignments have arrived in Hong Kong. On this basis the Hong Kong authorities have compiled the following list of figures in the six months to 22 January 1990:

Country of export to Hong Kong	*Quantity in Kilogrammes*
Elephant Ivory, 27 seizures	
Japan	13·25
Taiwan	12·8
India	3·4
Thailand	16·65
Korea	11
China	1,231·15
Philippines	2·4
United States of America	105·7
Spain	55
France	4
Dubai	1·6
Singapore	702
Total	2,158·95
Rhino Horn, two seizures	
Singapore	21·2

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *404*, if he will state the last recorded date of ivory export covered by the reply.

Mr. Waldegrave *[Holding answer 22 February 1990]*: 14 January 1990.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *404*, what access is being given by the Hong Kong authorities to those organisations involved in animal welfare and conservation to enable them to monitor the trade in ivory during the six-month exemption period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: *[holding answer 22 February 1990]*: The Hong Kong Management Authority maintain close and regular contact with organisations involved in animal welfare and conservation, particularly with the Hong Kong branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature. The authority is arranging for relevant statistical material to be supplied to these organisations.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

German Democratic Republic

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to encourage the expansion of trade with the German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Redwood: My Department continues to encourage the expansion of trade with the GDR and to make available the full range of its assistance to British exporters. We are taking particular care to ensure that up to date information is available to British industry about the economic changes in the market and about opportunities for business and investment. Recent and future events include: (i) an important seminar on 6 February organised with the CBI, at which the GDR deputy Trade Minister outlined the proposed legislative changes to enable the country to move towards a free economy. This was attended by over 60 British business men, who also had the opportunity of discussions with representatives of 10 industrial enterprises accompanying their Minister; (ii) participation by 100 companies in the Leipzig spring fair, which my noble Friend the Minister for Trade will visit; (iii) substantial participation of British companies in the annual meeting of the United Kingdom-GDR joint commission, which will take place in the GDR.

Rechar

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the European Commission to decide on his application to give Bulwell East, Bulwell

West and Byron wards in the Nottingham, North constituency objective 2 area status under the Rechar scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The whole of the city of Nottingham is already eligible for general "Objective 2" grants from the European Community structural funds. The Government's recent proposal to the European Commission was that Bulwell East, Bulwell West and Byron wards should be included among the coal-mining areas to benefit also from grants from the funds under the Rechar initiative.

The Commission has stated that it will determine and publish a list of eligible coal-mining areas for the purpose of Rechar by 27 April 1990.

Programmes of Rechar measures for the areas selected by the Commission will then be prepared, and I hope the Commission's decisions on these programmes, and on the amounts of Rechar grants, will be reached before the end of this year. The Commission's decisions on general "Objective 2" grants, for Nottingham city and other areas, will be taken separately.

Mail Order Catalogues

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will initiate a campaign to encourage companies issuing mail order catalogues to include the country of origin in their descriptions of the products offered for sale;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to require companies publishing and with responsibility for mail order catalogues to include the country of origin in the description of products.

Mr. Ridley: No. Such action would not be consistent with our obligations under the treaty of Rome. But catalogue issuers are free to include country of origin information if they wish.

Regional Development

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what level of financial support he is offering to the regional development organisations in England for 1990-91.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have offered the five English regional development organisations £4 million in grant in support of their inward investment promotion activities for 1990-91, nearly £1 million more than in 1989-90: an increase of 33 per cent.

This increase in funding is to enable the United Kingdom to remain competitive in promoting its locational advantages in the face of increasing competition from the rest of Europe for mobile inward investment in the single European market.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that 1990-91 is the first year of a revised funding policy. In future the Department will fund up to 100 per cent. of qualifying United Kingdom-based inward investment activity and up to 50 per cent. of overseas-based activity.

As well as giving greater certainty to the longer term planning of inward investment promotion, it also means that regional development organisations will be able to spend any additional locally raised funds on non-inward investment activities, like regional regeneration or intra-United Kingdom promotion.

The allocation of grant is as follows:

£'000

	1990-91 grant	*Increase on 1989-90*
Northern Development Company (in the North East)	1,180·0	198·3
Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association	850·0*	190·0
INWARD Ltd. (in the North West)	840·0	299·0
West Midlands Development Agency	620·0	220·0
Devon and Cornwall Development Bureau	510·0	88·0

Less Developed Countries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to assess the implications for United Kingdom trade policy and relations with the less developed countries from the introduction of arrangements for traded imports or raw materials and finished goods from less developed countries not to be fixed by the futures markets.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 March 1990]*: The futures markets are of benefit to producers and to those who supply or process raw materials by providing the opportunity for them to reduce the risks associated with future price volatility due to market conditions. Developing countries do not have to deal in these markets if they choose not to. Futures markets themselves do not establish commodity prices. Rather, they provide an estimate of likely future prices which may or may not subsequently turn out to be correct. Prices should be determined by supply and demand in the market. I therefore see no need for the assessment called for by the hon. Member.

I would also refer the hon. Member to a statement on United Kingdom commodity policy made by my hon. Friend the then Minister for Trade, on 21 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *781-82*.

Vehicle Write-offs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review the laws governing the subsequent refurbishment and sale of vehicles which have been written off by insurance companies.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Road traffic law is reviewed regularly with vehicle safety in mind. Many vehicles that are written off by insurance companies are capable of satisfactory repair. If they are not repaired properly, there are offences of using and of selling an unroadworthy vehicle. A prospective purchaser should consider having a vehicle inspected by an expert before buying it.

PRIME MINISTER

St. George's Hospital, Tooting

Q44. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to make an official visit to St. George's hospital, Tooting.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

German Unification

Q55. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on her most recent discussions with the three other former victorious allied powers, and also with the governments of West and East Germany, regarding German unification.

The Prime Minister: I have had separate discussions recently with senior representatives of all our major allies, and of the Soviet Union, on various aspects of German unification. The framework for discussion agreed at Ottawa last month is welcome and will allow for further close consultation among those concerned.

Social Fund

Q176. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to alter the Social Security Act 1986 as a result of the judgment, made in the High Court on Wednesday 21 February, on the administration of the social fund; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the replies from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 26 February 1990 at column *58* and on 1 March 1990 at column *319*.

Bed and Breakfast Hotels

Q199. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit any of London's bed and breakfast hotels.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 13 February 1990 at column *136*.

Homelessness

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on homelessness in London.

The Prime Minister: I have received a wide range of representations on aspects of homelessness in London. Following our review of the homelessness legislation, the measures announced in November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment include the allocation of additional resources to relieve and reduce homelessness pressures in London. We are now looking at the way in which the responsibilities of different Government Departments work in the prevention and relief of homelessness among single people. Further announcements will be made in due course.

Women

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister what official activities she has undertaken in the past year in her capacity as honorary president of Women in the World; and if she will make a statement on the achievements of Women in the World in raising funds for projects administered by United Nations development fund for women.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady may be referring to the "Women of the World Campaign" administered by the NGO, Women Aid. I have no connection with the organisation, nor am I its honorary president.

Engagements

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. After my duties in the House, I shall depart for a visit to Scotland.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the planned manpower levels for each of the next three years from 1 April for *(a)* Property Holdings and *(b)* for Property Services Agency services; and what were the manpower levels for the Property Services Agency over each of the previous three years.

Mr. Chope: Manpower in Property Holdings is currently planned to remain at the present level of 670 non-industrial and 1,060 industrial posts in the coming year, unless its responsibilities are altered. Future manpower levels in PSA Services will depend on the success of its component businesses.

The manpower levels in the agency in the last three years were as follows:

	Non-industrials	*Industrials*
1 April 1987	14,621	9,852
1 April 1988	14,339	9,210
1 April 1989	13,555	7,902

Figures exclude staff in the Crown Suppliers and include staff on work for United States forces.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conditions apply to the setting-up of the Property Services Agency as a Government-owned company; and what is the earliest date that such a company could be formed.

Mr. Chope: The establishment of a Government-owned company is an important step in the process of PSA privatisation. No decision has been taken on the timing of the establishment of such a company.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total cost of employing Price Waterhouse to advise on the commercialisation and privatisation of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope: The total cost of employing Price Waterhouse since it was commissioned in August 1988 has been £7·41 million.

Algae

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 17 January, *Official Report*, column *246*, concerning blue-green algae, if he is yet in a position

to list (*a*) the 53 locations, (*b*) the water companies and (*c*) the results of any successful prosecutions; and if he will make a statement in respect of the investigations carried out by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The 53 sites at which toxic algae blooms were identified by the NRA during 1989 are as follows:

Anglian
*Blickling Lake
*Fritton Lake (Lound Run)
*Barton Broad
Cadney Reservoir
Covenham Reservoir
*Cransley Reservoir
*Denton Reservoir
*Eyebrook Reservoir
Pitsford Reservoir
Rutland Water
*Sywell Lake
*Whisby Nature Reserve Lake
Grafham Reservoir
*Meadow Lake St. Ives
*Mount Farm Balancing Lake
*Scouton Mere, Scoulton
*Wyboston Lake, South Lagoon
*Hoverton Great Broad
*Lake Meadow, Billericay
*Seamere
*South Walsham Broad
*Aldwicle Pit, (Merchant Venturers)
Hollowell Reservoir
*Hughes & Sons Lake, Skellingthorp
*Overstone Lower Lake
Ravensthorpe Reservoir
*Teals Pit, Lincoln
*Abberton Reservoir
Alton Water
*Ardleigh Reservoir
*Broome Pit (No. 4)
*Filby Broad
*Hanningfield Reservoir
*Homersfield Lake
*Ormsby Broad
*Rollesby Sailing Club
*Toft Newton Reservoir

Severn Trent
Rudyard Lake

Wessex
Hawkridge Reservoir

South West
Old Mill Reservoir
Port Reservoir
Bussow Reservoir
* The Lake, Bicton
* Ornamental Pond, Bicton
* Meldon Pool
Drift Reservoir
* Langarth lake
* Main Pond, Bradley
* Stafford Moor

Yorkshire
Silsdon Reservoir
Beaver Dyke Reservoir
John O'Grants Reservoir
* Welton Water

Note
Those waters marked with a * are not owned by the water company

Prosecutions are not being considered at this stage as there is no evidence that these were a consequence of specific polluting incidents. The National Rivers Authority is currently carrying out a thorough investigation into the subject; its report will be completed this summer.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the final recommendations from the Boundary Commission over the future of county boundaries, and when he expects to legislate on any recommended changes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is under a statutory duty to complete its review of county boundaries by 31 March 1992. Within this overall requirement, the timetable is a matter for the commission. My right hon. Friend may not make any order within six weeks of receiving a report (to permit time for further representations) but aims to complete his consideration within a reasonable period after that. Orders to give effect to recommendations are usually made to take effect on 1 April after my right hon. Friend reaches his decision.

Building Maintenance Contracts

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the percentage of local authority contracts for day-to-day building maintenance which (*a*) are currently let to private contractors and (*b*) were let to private contractors in 1985.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: For the 342 local authorities required to report to the Secretary of State for the financial year 1985-86, the reported value of building maintenance work let to private contractors amounted to 45 per cent. of the total expenditure on building maintenance work by those authorities.

Information for 1989-90 is not available at present. The relevant annual reports are due to be submitted by 31 October of this year. Since the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 however, the proportion of work undertaken by private contractors has increased on average by about 1 per cent. per year. Recent changes in the legislation mean that more authorities with small direct labour organisations will come within scope of the Act, which may have the effect of increasing the proportion of work reported as allocated to private contractors.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate his Department has of the number of people employed in the assessment and collection of (*a*) the domestic rates in 1988-89 and (*b*) the community charge in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: Information on the number of people employed on domestic rates is not separately distinguishable in the available statistics. An assessment by Price Waterhouse in June 1988 commissioned by the Department suggested local authorities in England might employ between 10,500 and 13,100 staff on the community charge in 1990-91. Actual figures are not yet known.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will modify the administrative

arrangement for the community charge so that individual local authorities collect only that part of the charge which relates to their own expenditure.

Mr. Chope: No. Apportioning collection to each of district, county, fire and police authorities could only increase bureaucracy and costs.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is taking action to ensure that the levying of the poll tax is ratified by the Cornish Stannary Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No, because such action is unnecessary.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish all poll tax figures known to his Department throughout the United Kingdom where local authorities have to date settled the level for their area; and by how much each figure diverges from the Government's proposed level.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 21 February, *Official Report*, column *741*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the answer about the relationship of rates and community charge to net household income given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) of 12 January 1989, *Official Report*, column *732-34*.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not at present available.

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines his Department issues as to whether people who choose to pay their community charge by monthly instalments and are themselves paid at the end of each month are able to opt to pay the community charge at the end of the month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Advice to charging authorities on the collection of the community charge is contained in practice note No. 12, copies of which are in the Library of the House. Section 4 of that note deals with the exercise of the charging authority's discretion to enter into flexible payment arrangements for chargepayers. There is nothing to prevent charging authorities and chargepayers entering into agreements to pay in the way suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will assist local government authorities in England and Wales to issue their final and authoritative accounts for community charge payments by listing his decisions for and against community charge capping for each precepting authority.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will not hesitate to cap any authorities in England budgeting excessively for 1990-91. We are now looking at the precepts authorities have issued, but it would not be right for me to speculate on which authorities would be capped were we to introduce such a scheme. Welsh authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what level of current rate payment will a pensioner couple residing in Birmingham be eligible for transitional protection on a community charge of £406 per adult.

Mr. Chope: In a property occupied by two chargepayers the community charge transitional relief scheme provides assistance where two assumed community charges are more than £156 above the current rates bill (defined as the rateable value multiplied by the average poundage). In Birmingham the assumed community charge is £248·14. This means that in a property occupied by two chargepayers transitional relief is payable where the current rates bill is less than £340·36. If a pensioner couple has not previously paid rates or rent, transitional relief is payable on the difference between the threshold of £156 and the assumed community charge.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *440*, he will list the small minority of authorities for which he has information about the level of personal community charges.

Mr. Chope: Over two thirds of the 366 charging authorities in England have yet to provide this information to the Department. I intend to place a summary of the information returned in the Library of the House when information has been received from all authorities.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to amend the transitional arrangements for the community charge to take account of the actual charge set; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The community charge transitional scheme provides protection against increases in bills which would otherwise arise as a result of the structural change from the domestic rating system to the community charge. It is not designed to protect people from changes arising from individual authorities' spending decisions for which they are accountable to their electorates. The scheme therefore uses as a reference for the calculation of relief assumed community charges which are consistent with total standard spending of £32·8 billion in 1990-91. I have no plans to amend the scheme.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the 1990-91 standard spending assessment per head of population for the Kent county council.

Mr. David Hunt: The standard spending assessment for Kent county council in 1990-91 is £671 per adult.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make the assumed personal community charge in 1990-91 for each charging authority for the purposes of the community charge transitional relief scheme the same as its standard spending assessment figure per head where this is currently higher.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 7 March 1990]*: I have already set out the assumed community charges to be used in the transitional relief scheme in the community charge transitional relief report (England) laid before the House on 15 February.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters he has received in support of the principle that appellants should meet the costs of planning appeals and how many in opposition to this proposal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department's consultation paper "Efficient Planning", issued last July, included a proposal to introduce fees for planning appeals. This proposal attracted 127 responses in favour and 185 against. We are now considering all the responses to the paper.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth's letter of 25 January referring to Mr. Dennis Haylock of Rugby.

Mr. Chope: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Water Companies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the water companies that have hon. Members on their boards.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for individual companies and individual hon. Members.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if women's refuges are exempted from collective community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Any building may be designated for the purposes of the collective community charge if, in the opinion of the registration officer, it is used wholly or mainly as the sole or main residence of individuals most of whom stay for shot periods, and it would, accordingly, be difficult to register them individually. Whether a women's refuge could be designated, therefore, would depend on whether the majority of residents were considered to have changed their sole or main residence on moving into the refuge, or whether, in most cases, they had a sole or main residence elsewhere, from which they were only temporarily absent while in the refuge. It is for individual registration officers to take decisions on designation in the light of the facts of each case.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) *Official Report*, 28 February, column *194*, what are the reasons why low-level radioactive waste from outside the nuclear industry is stored for interim periods at Harwell; what storage charges per kilogramme of waste are made; and whether these vary over time of store.

Mr. Trippier: Low-level radioactive waste is currently stored at Harwell as part of the commercial activities of AEA Technology. Such storage is not subject to regulation by this Department. Questions relating to storage costs at Harwell are matters for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), *Official Report*, 28 February, column *194*, whether the data received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the volume of wastes accumulated are publicly available; and what plans there are to update the 1987 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory to which he refers.

Mr. Trippier: This Department does not maintain a central record of local accumulations of radioactive waste authorised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Records of such accumulations are kept by individual operators and are subject to scrutiny by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inspectors but are not publicly available.

The 1989 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory is in preparation and expected to be issued in about three months. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Commercial Development, Avebury

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of the public inquiries into the proposed commercial development at Avebury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The payroll cost to the Department of providing an inspector to hold a public inquiry into various appeals against planning and listed building enforcement notices served by Kennet district council and involving land at Avebury Manor was £2,094. There were also costs incurred by the Department on administration and by other public bodies that were involved in the inquiry.

City of London Heliport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 21 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *437*, what progress he has made in considering the implications of the planning application for the proposed City of London heliport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: There has been no change in my position since my answer of 21 December, *Official Report*, column *437*. The application is being considered by the Corporation of the City of London.

Drinking Water

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the EEC countries which add artificial fluorides to drinking water.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that fluoridation of public water supplies is permissible in a number of European Community countries and is mandatory in Ireland. It is also currently carried out in the United Kingdom and Spain.

Benzene

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to reduce the emission of benzene from industrial sources along the lines of the rules introduced by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The major potential industrial sources of benzene are already tightly controlled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; as and when more effective controls become available British industry is required to use them. In this regard, we are co-operating closely with our partners in the European Community to identify the best available techniques not entailing excessive costs to minimise benzene emissions from a number of industrial sectors.

Earth Day 1990

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what preparations Her Majesty's Government propose to undertake to celebrate and publicise the Earth Day 1990 campaign on 22 April.

Mr. Trippier: Organisation of events relating to Earth Day in this country is being handled by a range of environmental groups, including Friends of the Earth. We welcome all genuine efforts to improve public understanding of environmental issues, but we have no plans for direct Government involvement in Earth Day events.

Water Supplies

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the grant payment from central Government was under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944 to 1970 and the Industrial Development Act 1982 for water supplies to England in the last and current financial years.

Mr. Trippier: The amounts paid under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts in respect of water supply schemes are as follows:

1988-89 £	[1] *1989-90* £
215,403	84,989

[1] to 5 March 1990

The majority of schemes supported by the Department under the Industrial Development Act 1982 contain both water supply and sewerage works and it is not possible to separate out the amounts paid in respect of water supply. The total amounts paid by the Department under the Act are as follows:

1988-89 £	[1] *1989-90* £
1,245,864	1,713,972

[1] to 5 March 1990

Customer Services Committees

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is the chairman of the customer services committee for the area of the West Kent company; and what is the address at which he can be contacted in that capacity.

Mr. Trippier: The Director General of Water Services has announced that he has allocated the West Kent Water Company to the Southern customer services committee and has appointed Professor Judith Rees to be chairman of this committee. She can be contacted at the offices of the committee at the following address:

Fourth Floor,
30-34 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TL

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he decided not to direct the Director General of Water Services to establish customer services committees under the Water Act 1989 prior to his announcing his proposals for the K factors for the statutory water companies on 7 February.

Mr. Trippier: I have no powers to direct the director general in such matters.

Nature Conservation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what criteria are used when deciding whether or not revocation or discontinuance orders should be made in respect of planning permissions which give rise to conflict with national policy on nature conservation;

(2) what guidance is available to local planning authorities on the use of revocation or discontinuance powers in cases where planning permission affects important nature conservation interests.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 7 March 1990]*: The Government's policy on the use of powers to revoke planning permission was given in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), then Minister for Housing and Planning, on 20 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *329-30*.

Guidance on the use of discontinuance orders is given in planning policy guidance note 1 (PPG1), "General Policy and Principles", a copy of which is in the Library. Discontinuance orders and opposed revocation orders require the confirmation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for limiting the timescale between revised planning applications relating to planning applications previously refused and which relate to a site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 7 March 1990]*: The Department's consultation paper "Efficient Planning", issued last July, included a proposal to give local planning authorities the right to refuse to determine any application on the grounds that it was made within two years following an unsuccessful appeal and there had been no material change in circumstances. The responses to the consultation paper are being considered.

Internal Audit

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many internal auditors are employed in those departments for which he is responsible and at what

cost, how many internal audit reports were produced in 1989; how many of these were drawn to the attention of a Minister in his Department; and what internal audit work is sub-contracted to private firms and at what cost.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 7 March 1990]*: In 1989 there were 17 internal auditors in DoE (Central) together with three other staff at a cost of £356,000. The internal audit unit produced 28 reports, none of which was drawn to the attention of Ministers. No internal audit work was sub-contracted to private firms.

During the same period there were 72 auditors in the Property Services Agency and four support staff at a cost of £1,481,000. The internal audit unit produced 253 reports, none of which was drawn to the attention of Ministers. The PSA employed consultants for 244 days at a cost of £46,000.

North Sea Dumping

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent communications he has received from his Danish counterpart concerning United Kingdom policies over the disposal of industrial toxic waste in the North sea.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 7 March 1990]*: I received a letter from the Danish Environment Minister last week. The points raised by Ms. Dybkjaer have been covered in recent Government announcements which have been conveyed to her.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to meet the objective that, by the end of 1992, no young person should be employed in a job without training.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils will be able to use youth training funding to develop partnerships between local businesses, education and training providers with the aim of ensuring that no young person should be employed in a job without training.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to ensure that by the end of 1992, two thirds of young people have achieved National Council for Vocational Qualifications level 2 and one quarter have reached National Council for Vocational Qualifications level 3.

Mr. Nicholls: The new youth training arrangements to be introduced in May offer all young people in the labour market the opportunity to achieve qualifications which at a minimum are at or equivalent to level 2 in the framework established by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. Targets will be agreed annually for progressive increases in the skills attainment of young people.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the objectives stated in the speech by his predecessor of 6 December 1989 remain the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Howard: My predecessor offered a framework of objectives for the development of training in the 1990s. Progress on meeting the objectives depends primarily on action by organisations outside Government; they cannot be specific Government targets. I will be considering with those concerned the steps that need to be taken. With falling numbers of young people and increasing international competition, training is a key priority for the 1990s. That is why we are establishing training and enterprise councils across the country to improve our training effort and our competitive position.

Bellwin Scheme

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider widening the current provisions of the Bellwin scheme in respect of flood damage to reimburse local authorities for essential repairs and maintenance work in addition to that required to safeguard lives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Bellwin scheme already encompasses work to safeguard property or prevent severe inconvenience in addition to work required to safeguard lives. It is not, however, our practice to include losses which are normally insurable.

Disabled People

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts about forms of assistance provided to encourage the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: Officials are in regular contact with their European counterparts in the disability field and have access to information about provision in all EC countries. In addition, my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, has recently had informal discussions with Belgian Secrétaire d'Etat for Public Health and Disablement Policy Mr. Roger Delizée.

Training Vouchers

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received about training vouchers.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received various representations on this subject.

TEC (West Lancashire)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to establish a training and enterprise council in west Lancashire.

Mr. Eggar: Development funding has been approved to establish a training and enterprise council in west Lancashire.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of unemployment and the number of unfilled vacancies in Southend-on-Sea at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: In January 1990 the unemployment rate for the Southend travel-to-work area was 4·7 per cent. and the

number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres was 2,090. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. The latest research shows that nationally only about one third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are his minimum and maximum estimates of the percentage of the British work force that is engaged in more than one job and is subsequently counted twice in the employment totals.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 13 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *203*. No further information on persons counted twice in the employment totals is available.

Work Placements

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figures for the number of action credit work placements which have been completed for each of the three pilot sites of Chatham, Sunderland and Bristol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested will not be available until after the end of the action credit scheme pilot, which is due to finish at the end of August 1990.

Action Credit

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why he decided to launch the action credit scheme before the three pilot schemes have finished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No decision has been taken to launch an action credit scheme nationally. At present the Training Agency is running a small pilot in three areas of the country for ET leavers.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what factors he considered in deciding to continue to make it compulsory for construction firms to participate in the operations of the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to her on 22 November 1989.

Benefit Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by standard region of Great Britain, including Greater London, what is the current average length of time between a claimant's referral for adjudication and an adjudication officer's decision on grounds of restricted availability and non-availability for work.

Mr. Eggar: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the speed with which adjudication officers make decisions—the time between their receiving a referral and reaching a decision—is monitored in a 5 per cent. sample of cases. The sample shows that for the three month period ending 31 December 1989, the percentage of restricted availability and availability questions decided within four weeks of referral to an adjudication officer, for each employment service region, was as follows:

	Availability *Percentage*	*Restricted availability* *Percentage*
Southern	90·9	81·1
Eastern	98·1	91·2
Western	79·2	68·8
West Midlands	96·7	97·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	87·1	79·3
South West	85·2	81·5
Northern	95·8	100·0
East Midlands	83·8	78·9
Wales	96·1	100·0
Scotland	89·2	87·8
North West	80·7	76·0

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for the three-month period to the end of *(a)* September 1989 and *(b)* December 1989, if he will give the decisions of adjudication officers on doubtful fresh claims, renewal claims and reviewed claims for unemployment benefit showing the numbers allowed, disallowed, referred to a local tribunal, revised in favour of claimants, revised adversely to claimants and not revised in the following categories of questions: *(a)* employed to full normal extent, *(b)* engaged in employment, *(c)* availability, *(d)* restricted availability, *(e)* leaving voluntarily, *(f)* for misconduct, *(g)* neglecting to avail of employment, *(h)* refusal of employment, *(i)* refusal or premature termination of training, *(j)* refusal to carry out written recommendations and *(k)* restart.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the letter I sent her on 29 December 1989 enclosing details of the various decisions requested for the three month period ending 30 September 1989.

Figures for the period ending 31 December 1989 are not yet available but I will write to the hon. Member when they are to hand.

Analysis of adjudication officer's decisions are published quarterly by the Department of Social Security, under the title "Unemployment Statistics, Quarterly Analysis of Decisions of Adjudication Officers". This shows the number of adjudication officer's decisions in each category of question of doubt together with the number of cases allowed, disallowed, or disqualified. These publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by standard region of Great Britain, including Greater London, what is the current average length of time between an unemployed claimant receiving an adjudication officer's decision on grounds of restricted availability and non-availability for work and a subsequent appeal.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 23 October 1989, *Official Report*, column *326*.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants have gained a bridging allowance; and, of these, how many have been awarded to pregnant claimants under 18 years.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 277,769 young people have made successful applications for bridging allowance from its

introduction on 11 September 1988 to 8 February 1990. Information on the number of awards made to pregnant claimants is not available.

Earnings

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the proportion of female part-time workers in Great Britain, in April 1989, whose hourly earnings, exclusive of overtime, fell below *(a)* £2·80, *(b)* £3·00, *(c)* £3·20, *(d)* £3·60, *(e)* £4·00 and *(f)* £4·50.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimated percentages of part-time adult female employees earnings below specified amounts in the new earnings survey sample in April 1989 were:

Hourly earnings less than £	*Percentage*
2·80	39
3·00	48
3·20	57
3·60	69
4·00	77
4·50	83

Hourly earnings excluding overtime; earnings not affected by absence.

Greece (Exhibition)

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to traditional settlements in Greece to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 26 to 30 March.

WALES

Official Visits

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those parliamentary constituencies in Wales that he has visited in an official capacity since being appointed to his present post.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information on constituencies visited is not collected centrally, but I have, of course, visited all the main areas of the Principality since taking up office as Secretary of State for Wales.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of public expenditure is spent *(a)* by his Department, *(b)* by Welsh county councils, in total and separately and *(c)* by Welsh district councils, in total and separately.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total of the Department's central Government expenditure was £1,730 million in 1988-89 compared with £1,546 million in 1987-88. The full information requested for county councils and district councils in Wales is only available for 1987-88 because a small number of authorities have yet to make complete returns to the Department for 1988-89. The information for 1987-88 is shown in the table:

1987-88 outturn expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility

£000

	Current spending	*Capital spending*	*Total spending*
County Councils:			
Clwyd	154,193	20,833	175,026
Dyfed	138,415	15,363	153,778
Gwent	169,319	22,470	191,789
Gwynedd	96,949	8,791	105,740
Mid Glamorgan	219,819	25,076	244,895
Powys	51,815	7,728	59,543
South Glamorgan	142,813	38,472	181,285
West Glamorgan	145,538	25,777	171,315
Total	1,118,861	164,510	1,283,371
District Councils:			
Alyn and Deeside	4,185	3,768	7,953
Colwyn	3,293	2,372	5,665
Delyn	4,112	2,293	6,405
Glwyndwr	2,963	1,427	4,390
Rhuddlan	4,299	2,763	7,062
Wrexham Maelor	8,830	7,842	16,672
Carmarthen	3,809	2,827	6,636
Ceredigion	3,833	3,283	7,116
Dinefwr	2,272	2,256	4,528
Llanelli	6,466	4,343	10,809
Presceli/Pembrokeshire	3,629	3,100	6,729
South Pembroke	2,773	4,398	7,171
Blaenau Gwent	7,090	14,697	21,787
Islwyn	4,625	10,947	15,572
Monmouth	4,437	3,840	8,277
Newport	10,557	14,405	24,962
Torfaen	7,036	6,986	14,022
Aberconwy	4,014	650	4,664
Arfon	4,540	4,155	8,695
Dwyfor	2,031	2,464	4,495
Meirionnydd	2,539	1,281	3,820
Ynys Mon	5,320	5,829	11,149
Cynon Valley	5,288	9,170	14,458
Merthyr Tydfil	6,532	6,762	13,294
Ogwr	9,151	8,440	17,591
Rhondda	8,456	14,523	22,979
Rhymney Valley	8,627	10,666	19,293
Taff-Ely	6,183	4,910	11,093
Brecknock	2,967	2,553	5,520
Montgomeryshire	2,363	2,454	4,817
Radnor	1,252	670	1,922
Cardiff	19,545	26,167	45,712
Vale of Glamorgan	6,425	3,717	10,142
Port Talbot	4,340	3,852	8,192
Lliw Valley	3,506	4,560	8,066
Neath	4,492	5,879	10,371
Swansea	16,189	14,577	30,766
Total	207,966	224,826	432,792

Water Pollution

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an assessment of the pollution effects of eutrophication on Bosherton Lakes in Pembroke.

Mr. Grist: It is for the National Rivers Authority to consider what action may be necessary.

Leukaemia

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will institute a study to make recommendations as to whether workers at nuclear power stations in Wales run any risk of passing leukaemia on to their offspring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* In its second and third reports, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) recommended that studies of the health of the offspring of radiation workers should be instigated. The Government have accepted these recommendations in full and are urgently considering a number of relevant research proposals.

SCOTLAND

Woodland

83. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total acreage of broadleaved woodland planted in the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table, which covers broadleaved planting undertaken or grant-aided by the Forestry Commission in the years concerned.

Year ended 31 March	*New planting hectares*	*Restocking hectares*	*Total hectares*
1985	656	1,188	1,844
1986	905	1,798	2,703
1987	1,618	2,593	4,211
1988	2,868	3,151	6,019
1989	3,035	2,953	5,988

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of unemployment in Scotland at the most recent date.

Mr. Lang: The level of unemployment in Scotland on 11 January 1990 stood at 219,176.

Prisons

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the penal establishments in Scotland, by security category, giving the number of inmates in each at a convenient date in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The categories of the penal establishments in Scotland, together with the number of inmates in each in November 1979 and November 1989 are set out in the table.

Category	*Penal establishments listed by Security Category*	*Inmate population at 27 November 1979*	*Inmate population at 24 November 1989*
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Aberdeen	181	132
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Barlinnie	956	814
B	Her Majesty's Special Unit, Barlinnie	6	7
B	Her Majesty's Prison and Young Offenders Institution, Cornton Vale	162	127
B	Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution, Dumfries	144	122
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Edinburgh	648	544
B	Her Majesty's Prison and Young Offenders Institution, Glenochil[1]	536	428
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Greenock	24	188
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Inverness	109	85
B	Her Majesty's Remand Institution, Longriggend	278	208
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Perth	539	429
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Peterhead	244	124
B	Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution, Polmont[2]	294	398
B	Her Majesty's Prison, Shotts	58	448
C	Her Majesty's Prison, Dungavel	108	117
C	Her Majesty's Prison, Friarton	71	44
C	Her Majesty's Prison, Low Moss	315	311
C	Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution, Castle Huntly[2]	82	108
D	Her Majesty's Prison, Noranside[1,2]	62	114
D	Her Majesty's Prison, Penninghame[1]	49	72
	Total	4,866	4,820

[1] Glenochil was a Young Offenders Institution and Detention Centre in 1979.
[2] Polmont, Castle Huntley and Noranside were Borstal Institutions in 1979. Female Borstal inmates were accommodated at Cornton Vale.

Housing (Glasgow)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the capital programme expressed at constant prices available to Glasgow district council for housing in each year from 1975 to the nearest available year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Block allocations have been issued in respect of housing capital expenditure only since 1978-79. Gross allocations issued to Glasgow district council, incorporating the estimate of capital receipts made at the start of each year and any supplementary allocations made during the year, are set out in the table, expressed in 1989-90 prices.

City of Glasgow district council—HRA and non-HRA gross allocations (1989-90 prices)

	HRA (£ million)	*Non-HRA (£ million)*
1978-79	126·2	28·6
1979-80	121·9	26·5
1980-81	104·6	28·7
1981-82	92·4	29·6
1982-83	82·6	39·1
1983-84[1]	88·4	39·4
1984-85	60·5	104·3
1985-86	71·2	48·6
1986-87	79·7	48·8
1987-88	95·8	61·5
1988-89	94·2	53·8
1989-90	96·1	54·7

[1] Special arrangements applied in 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent subject to certain conditions.

Policing (Strathclyde)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what financial resources were available for policing in Strathclyde region in each year since its inception; and what was the proportion of central and local government expenditure in each year;

(2) what is his estimate of the financial resources available to Strathclyde regional council for police services in each financial year since its inception; and if he will express the figures in each year from the second year onwards as a percentage increase or decrease on the previous year and also show against each year the annual rate of inflation;

(3) what policies the Government intend to pursue to offset shortfall in the Strathclyde police force;

(4) what recent representations he has received from Strathclyde regional council about the need to direct more resources to filling the shortfall in police officers;

(5) when was the latest assessment made of manpower level needs for Strathclyde police.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Assessment of the manpower needs of Strathclyde police is a matter for Strathclyde regional council, subject to the establishment of the force authorised by the Secretary of State in the light of advice from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. The police establishment of the force was last determined in 1982. The allocation of resources to eliminate the current shortfall of actual strength as compared with authorised establishment is the responsibility of the regional council. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has received no recent representations in this matter but he stands ready to pay police grant on all approved net expenditure on the police. Since 1986-87 grant has been at the rate of 51 per cent. of net approved expenditure; previously the rate was 50 per cent.

Net approved expenditure on Strathclyde police from 1975-76 is given in the table, together with information about percentage increases and the rate of inflation.

Year	*Net approved expenditure* £	*Percentage increase*	*Inflation per cent.*
1975-76	41,001,332·03	—	—
1976-77	51,474,235·92	25·5	15·3
1977-78	53,767,471·29	4·5	14·0
1978-79	63,745,604·37	18·6	8·2
1979-80	78,076,467·41	22·5	15·9
1980-81	93,141,224·46	19·3	16·3
1981-82	108,631,863·32	16·6	11·5
1982-83	118,244,193·93	8·8	7·1
1983-84	128,569,888·26	8·7	4·7
1984-85	138,692,064·65	7·9	5·1
1985-86	140,293,517·96	1·2	5·9
1986-87	150,396,918·13	7·2	3·2
1987-88	168,779,970·33	12·2	3·9
1988-89	[1]177,522,187·88	5·2	6·0

[1] Provisional.

Criminal Law

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Law Commission last examined the criminal law and the protection it offers to people aged over 60 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission has not examined this issue.

Housing

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the housing developments in the Highlands and Islands Development Board area which have been given approval by Scottish Homes since its inception on 1 April 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Such information is not held by the Scottish Development Department as approval of individual housing developments is a matter for Scottish Homes itself. I have asked that body to forward the information requested directly to the hon. Member.

Schools (Safety)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the safety laws and regulations which apply to schools in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires education authorities to ensure that the premises and equipment of all educational establishments under their management are maintained in a condition conducive to the good health and safety of everyone on the premises. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 also applies in schools. In addition, there is an extensive range of regulations relating to safety considerations which could apply to schools as to other institutions in particular circumstances.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether schools in Scotland are exempted from fire regulations requiring buildings to have a fire certificate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Schools are not required to have fire certificates. Only a limited number of types of premises is designated as requiring fire certificates under section 1 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The Government have no plans to extend the range of designation. The question of fire safety in schools is the subject of guidance to education authorities issued in 1982.

Crossroads Scheme

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about funding of Crossroads by the Greater Glasgow health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Officials of the Scottish Office met the chairman of Crossroads (Scotland) care attendant schemes on 8 December 1989 when the funding of a number of local Crossroads schemes, including schemes in Strathclyde, was discussed. It is for the Greater Glasgow health board to decide whether and to what extent it wishes to support Crossroads.

Water Authorities

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current amount of debt owed to the Exchequer by Scottish water authorities; and what the amount was in the previous year.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on the source of local authority borrowing for specific services is not readily

available. Figures on the total outstanding debt of Scottish water authorities at 31 March 1989 were given on 13 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *189*. Corresponding figures for 31 March 1988 are given in the table.

Capital debt outstanding at 31 March 1988: Water account

Region/Islands area	*£'000*
Borders	8,859
Central	20,416
Dumfries and Galloway	11,772
Fife	30,159
Grampian	57,196
Highland	15,576
Lothian	85,038
Strathclyde	119,324
Tayside	25,546
Orkney	2,412
Shetland	719
Western Isles	2,511

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if all United Kingdom ballistic missile nuclear submarines have now been checked, in home port, for possible cracks in reactor coolant pipes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Members for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on Tuesday 6 March, *Official Report*, columns *614-15*.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a special safety plan for areas adjoining a Z-berth would be introduced in cases where local councils refuse to co-operate in establishing such a plan.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role and actions would be required of a local council in the event of an incident requiring activation of a special safety plan in the vicinity of a Z-berth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the event of an incident requiring activation of a special safety plan in the vicinity of a Z-berth, as in any other civil emergency, the local authorities would act in support of the emergency services and carry out their normal functions in the light of the situation and of technical advice from the Ministry of Defence and the National Radiological Protection Board.

Trident

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all outside contracts issued by the Atomic Weapons Establishment managment in connection with the Trident programme, including dates and costs.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information that the hon. Member requests is classified.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which establishments work on the Trident programme has been transferred from the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston.

Mr. Alan Clark: AWE Cardiff is undertaking some non-fissile manufacturing work transferred from AWE Aldermaston.

Combat Body Armour

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a full description of combat body armour; and which units of the armed services have been provided with it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Combat body armour is a lightweight vest covering the torso, designed to protect the wearer against fragmenting munitions. It is a front-opening garment with side vents and adjustable straps to ensure a proper fit. It will be available in six sizes, the medium size weighing 2·5 kg.

No combat body armour has yet been issued, but it will be supplied to service men as an item of personal equipment as supplies become available.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost in both cash and in man hours to his Department in providing alternative civilian cover during the ambulance dispute *(a)* to the most recent convenient date and *(b)* projected for the period from the commencement and termination of the period of cover.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Up to 31 January 1990, extra costs in the region of £3·5 million arising from service participation in the provision of accident and emergency cover during the ambulance dispute have been identified for recovery from the Department of Health, the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Welsh Office. Up to 6 March 1990 a total of about 1·1 million service man hours had been deployed.

It would not be practicable to make projections either of extra costs or of man hours because the timing of the final withdrawal of service assistance will depend on the outcome of the ballot of ambulance staff and, if the decision is to accept the management offer, the arrangements which are made in different areas for a return to normal working.

Ammunition Contracts

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions are placed upon manufacturers of ammunition in the United Kingdom that wish to bid for Her Majesty's Government ammunition contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No restrictions are placed on manufacturers in the United Kingdom who wish to bid for ammunition contracts offered in open competition. Certain natures of ammunition for delivery up to 31 March 1993 are procured under the agreement with Royal Ordnance plc which was announced to the House on 27 July 1988 by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), the former Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement. In addition, there may be restrictions when a nature of ammunition is procured under collaborative arrangements or is a proprietary item.

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HOME DEPARTMENT

Wandsworth Prison Gallows

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the name and address of the company contracted to maintain the gallows that are kept at Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The gallows are maintained by the prison's works department.

Civil Defence

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations his Department has received calling for the repeal of existing legislation imposing specific civil defence duties on local authorities; and if he will list them.

Mr. John Patten: During the las six months the Home Office has received 16 representations from Members of Parliament, local authorities and other organisations calling specifically for the repeal of existing legislation imposing civil defence duties on local authorities.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations his Department has received calling for the preparation of a new Act of Parliament which would impose duties upon appropriate public and private sector organisations to undertake comprehensive emergency planning for peacetime disasters and accidents; and if he will list them.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the civil emergencies adviser to assess local authority requirements for effective peacetime emergency planning. I understand that the adviser has received a number of representations, which are being treated in confidence.

Detainees' Medical Records

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures exist for passing medical information on detained persons from the police to the prison service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The relevant procedures are set out in paragraph 4.33 and appendix 13 of the consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters. They require the police to complete a form (POL/1) in respect of every prisoner handed over to prison custody or transferred between police forces who is considered to present special risks, including physical illness or mental disturbance.

Motorists (Video Evidence)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces in the United Kingdom are currently using video equipment to monitor the driving habits of motorists in order to furnish the courts with specific evidence for the prosecution of offenders.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Nine forces in England and Wales and five in Scotland are using in-car video equipment to record evidence of motorists' poor driving behaviour. Recordings are used either to educate the motorist or may be presented in court to support a police officer's evidence that an offence has been committed. I understand that a further four forces in England and Wales are shortly to acquire similar equipment.

Prison Inmates

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which London prisons have an inmates committee.

Mr. Mellor: Brixton, Downview, Feltham, Holloway and Wormwood Scrubs have inmate committees.

Forensic Pathology

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give, in respect of the report on the working party on forensic pathology *(a)* the date on which he announced the setting up of the working party, *(b)* the date on which the report was published, *(c)* the period of consultation on the report's proposals, *(d)* the date when he received Mr. Wasserman's comments and *(e)* the expected date when he will announce his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The establishment of the working party on forensic pathology was announced on 17 July 1984 and its report published on 25 July 1989. A period until 31 October 1989 was allowed for comments but this was later extended until the end of the year. These are now being considered and we expect to announce our response shortly.

Cable Television

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cable television systems are operating at present in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Cable Authority that 15 broadband cable systems are operational. In addition, I understand there are 58 licensed upgrade systems and 153 licensed satellite master antenna television (SMATV) systems operational.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by district, the companies that have applied for cable television franchise in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Cable Authority that three franchises have been advertised in South Yorkshire covering Rotherham and Doncaster; Sheffield; and Barnsley. The following seven companies applied for the Rotherham and Doncaster franchise:

(i) Britannia Cable Systems South Yorkshire;
(ii) Cable Communications (Rotherham and Doncaster) Ltd.;
(iii) Comment Cable Vision South Yorkshire Ltd.;
(iv) Doncaster Telecommunications Complex Ltd. and Rotherham Telecommunications Complex Ltd.;
(v) Don River Cable Teleplus Ltd.;
(vi) South Yorkshire Cablevision Ltd.; and
(vii) South Yorkshire Cablevision (UK) Ltd.

The Cable Authority hopes to award the franchise in mid-May.

The following eight companies have applied for the Sheffield franchise:

(i) Britannia Cable Systems Sheffield;
(ii) Cable Communications (Sheffield) Ltd;
(iii) General Cable Ltd;
(iv) Sheffield Cable Teleplus Plc;
(v) Sheffield Cable Media Ltd;
(vi) Sheffield Cablevision Ltd;
(vii) Sheffield Television and Communications Ltd; and
(viii) Telecable of Sheffield Ltd.

The Cable Authority hopes to award the franchise in early June. Applications for the Barnsley franchise close on 16 March.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his earliest estimate of the date at which all of the United Kingdom has access to cable television coverage.

Mr. Mellor: The Cable Authority has awarded or advertised franchises potentially covering 14·5 million homes, which is approximately two thirds of the total number of homes in the United Kingdom. It has always been recognised it was unlikely that all homes would ever be cabled.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the initial application fee charge requested by the Cable Authority for a cable television franchise; what proportion is returnable to unsuccessful applicants; and if he will make a statement as to what the application fee charge is used for.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Cable Authority that application fees are charged according to the following tariff:

Number of homes in franchise area	*Application fee* £
Up to 50,000	5,500
50,001 to 150,000	12,000
150,001 to 250,000	18,000
250,001 to 350,000	25,000
Over 350,000	30,000

Application fees are not returnable to unsuccessful applicants.

This application fee is levied in accordance with section 6(1) of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. Under section 18(1) of that Act the authority is under a duty to ensure that its revenues are sufficient to enable them to meet their obligations and to discharge its functions under the Act. A copy of the Cable Authority's annual report and accounts is available in the Library.

Electoral Registration

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much is to be spent by central Government in 1989-90 and 1990-91 on advertising campaigns in connection with electoral registration in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* overseas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

	1989-90 £	*1990-91* £
Great Britain	486,000	486,000
Overseas	—	760,000

Drink Driving

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries have resulted from drink-driving offences for which there were convictions each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions for drink-driving offences there have been in each year since 1979; and how many of these resulted in a custodial sentence.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published under offence group 3 in tables 10 and 15 of the Home Office statistical bulletin, issue 34/89. A copy of the bulletin is in the Library.

West Midlands Police Force

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police force as to what action was taken against former Detective Inspector Paul Matthews regarding his activities on behalf of Amway International while a serving member of the West Midlands police force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that in 1984-85 an internal inquiry was carried out by officers from the West Midlands police into allegations that Mr. Matthews was engaged in business activities involving the company Amway United Kingdom. There was no evidence to justify disciplinary proceedings, but following the inquiry Mr. Matthews was seen by the deputy chief constable and given words of advice.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Police Complaints Authority as to what steps they have taken to interview former Detective Inspector Paul Matthews in connection with the authority's investigation into allegations made by Martin Foran.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The course of any investigation which is being supervised by the Police Complaints Authority is a matter for them to arrange with the officer appointed to conduct the investigation. Home Office Ministers have no authority to intervene in the process, although I have no doubt that all relevant steps will be taken to ensure that Mr. Foran's allegations are fully investigated.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hours of police manpower time were expended by Britain's police forces in providing alternative emergency cover during the ambulance dispute; and what are his projected probable costs for the exercise both in cash and in man-hours *(a)* to the most recent convenient date and *(b)* projected for the period from the initial commencement to the final withdrawal of cover.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the total number of man-hours which forces have provided in assisting ambulance services in England and Wales up to and including 5 March has been about 1·5 million.

As police authority, my right hon. and learned Friend is aware that up to 4 February the Metropolitan police have charged the South West Thames regional health authority £5·8 million for police assistance during the ambulance dispute. I am unaware of the charges which other forces have made of their relevant health authorities.

To make projections is not practicable because the timing of the final withdrawal of police assistance will depend on the outcome of the ballot of ambulance staff and, if the decision is to accept the management offer, the arrangements which are made in different areas for a return to normal working.

Police Consultative Groups

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will meet the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss means to ensure that police consultative groups continue to receive up-to-date information in the detail that has been available in the Metropolitan police divisional reports;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that copies of each Metropolitan Police division's annual management report are made available to the relevant police consultative groups;

(3) what consultation was undertaken with police consultative committees and others prior to the Metropolitan police replacing divisional reports with the document entitled "Policing."

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that a different format is to be adopted for the divisional reports available to police consultative groups this year, with the aim of making them more accessible and readable and thus reach a wider audience. The change is being made after consultation with every consultative group in the Metropolitan area, and a pilot project in Wandsworth. Any information previously contained in a divisional report which is absent from this year's report will be available on request from the division concerned. The divisional management report is an internal working document concerned with the management of the division itself, and there is no intention to make it available publicly.

Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for the latest date available, what percentage of parole applications from *(a)* white and *(b)* black prisoners were successful in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The present central computer system on parole does not hold information on the ethnic origin of prisoners and it is not, therefore, possible to produce the figures requested. However, a new system is scheduled for 1991 which will make such analyses possible and these are planned.

Parole Board

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many parole dossiers the Parole Board dealt with in each year from 1985; and what percentages of prisoners were granted parole.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested, taken from the most recently published report of the Parole Board, is as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Board caseload	6,401	7,655	7,508	7,703
Percentage of Board caseload granted parole	51	46	47	48

Status of Women

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is representing Her Majesty's Government at the current review of forward-looking strategies held by the United Nations Commission in Vienna on the status of women.

Mr. John Patten: Dr. Susan Atkins of the Home Office and Mr. Robin Gwynn of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

War Crimes Inquiry

Mr. John L. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government have for responding to the war crimes inquiry.

Mr. Waddington: The Government have now had the opportunity to consider the implications of the parliamentary debates held last December, and have concluded that legislation should be introduced to enable war crimes trials to be held in this country. I am introducing the Bill today. It gives effect to the principal recommendation of the war crimes inquiry that British courts should be given jurisdiction over offences of murder, culpable homicide and manslaughter committed as war crimes in Germany or German-occupied territory during the period of the Second World War, by persons who are now British citizens or resident in the United Kingdom. The Bill also provides, as the inquiry recommended in paragraph 9.43, for the use in war crimes trials of the procedure for transfer to the Crown Court without committal proceedings, which is already available in respect of serious fraud cases; the Bill mirrors the provisions for fraud trials by providing for the Crown Court to dismiss a charge prior to trial, where it appears to the judge that there would be insufficient evidence to convict. Finally, the Bill provides authority for central government to meet the costs of war crimes investigations in England and Wales.

The War Crimes Bill contains no other provisions. In respect of the other procedural recommendations in the war crimes report, the Government have reached the following conclusions:

(i) *Live Television Evidence* (paragraph 9.34). Section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 already provides for the admissibility of live television evidence from abroad in proceedings in England and Wales. The Government intend to bring the provision into effect in the first instance in respect of homicide trials and trials of serious and complex fraud with further areas becoming covered as resources allow. No provision for live television evidence from abroad yet exists in Scottish law: appropriate amendments are to be tabled in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

(ii) *Powers to request evidence to be taken on commission abroad and the admissibility of video recordings of evidence taken abroad by letters of request* (paragraphs 9.37 and 9.38). Clause 3 of the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill, now before Parliament, provides for the issuing of letters of request seeking the taking of evidence abroad. This will include a facility by which evidence can be taken on commission. The admissibility of documentary evidence, subject to appropriate safeguards as to the circumstances in which the evidence was taken and the fairness of its use in trials, was provided for in England and Wales by Part II of, and Schedule 2 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1988. This would mean, for example, that video recordings of evidence taken as a result of a letter of request could be introduced where it would be safe to do so. The position in Scottish law concerning the admissibility of documentary evidence is to be clarified by amendments to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

(iii) *Admissibility of evidence from persons now dead* (paragraph 9.41). The Government believe that the courts can admit such evidence (where it is safe to do so) and that no change in the law is required in this respect.

(iv) *Authentication of archives without oral testimony* (paragraph 9.42). The Government have decided that no change to the law should be made to accommodate this proposal.

Young Offenders

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of males under the age of 17 years remanded in custody in remand centres from Welsh courts during 1988;

(2) what was the total number of males under the age of 17 years who were made subject to an unruly certificate from Welsh courts during 1988.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 1 March 1990]:* Information on certificates of unruliness is not recorded centrally. The information available relates to 15 and 16-year-old boys initially received on remand into prison service establishments. A certificate is required for such boys received as untried and for some of those received as convicted unsentenced; it is not required for those committed in custody to the Crown Court for sentence under section 37 of the Magistrates Courts Act 1980. In 1988, it is estimated that about 50 boys aged under 17 were initially remanded by courts in Wales to prison service establishments.

HEALTH

Food Poisoning

82. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning were recorded in England in each year from 1984 to 1989.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

Food poisoning

Year	*OPCS formally notified*	*OPCS otherwise ascertained*	*Totals*
1984	13,247	7,455	20,702
1985	13,143	6,099	19,242
1986	16,502	7,446	23,948
1987	20,363	8,968	29,331
1988	27,826	11,887	39,713
1989	39,125	15,588	54,713

Provisional.

The OPCS collates notifications of food poisoning and publishes them weekly for England and Wales. The statutory notifications of food poisoning sent to OPCS are based on clinical diagnosis or suspicion of food poisoning —clinical specimens for laboratory investigation may not have been taken.

Reasons for the increase in 1989 are unclear, but may be explained in part by the unusually long warm summer and in part by greater interest in identifying and reporting infections consequent upon considerable professional and public attention to food safety issues.

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of the successful tender for the laundry contract awarded in each health authority in 1987 and 1988; and what was the actual cost of the service in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not held centrally on the value of successful tenders for laundry contracts awarded by health authorities in 1987 and 1988, nor on the actual cost of these services in 1988 and 1989.

However, the table shows that total expenditure on laundry services in 1988-89 for health authorities that have awarded laundry contracts in 1987 and 1988.

Total expenditure on laundry services in 1988-89 for health authorities who have awarded laundry contracts in 1987 and 1988

Health Authority	*Expenditure £*
Northern Region	
Northumberland	596,918
South Tees	588,437
South West Durham	329,178
Sunderland	447,903
South Cumbria	206,035
West Cumbria	247,695
Yorkshire Region	
Airedale	323,719
Bradford	443,366
Calderdale	332,447
Harrogate	183,910
Northallerton	80,067
Pontefract	227,805
Scarborough	149,857
Wakefield	212,378
Trent Region	
Nottingham	1,198,670
East Anglia Region	
Cambridge	672,789
Peterborough	356,332

Health Authority	Expenditure £
North West Thames Region	
North Bedfordshire	216,130
North East Thames Region	
Hampstead	671,779
South East Thames Region	
Camberwell	391,839
Dartford	293,698
Hastings	327,957
Lewisham	645,017
Maidstone	367,927
Medway	321,097
South East Kent	447,080
West Lambeth	509,814
South West Thames Region	
Merton and Sutton	667,806
Richmond	275,181
East Surrey	497,094
Mid Surrey	445,542
Worthing	212,877
Wessex Region	
Salisbury	289,601
Southampton	576,908
West Dorset	319,672
Oxford Region	
West Berkshire	562,153
South Western Region	
Cornwall	780,596
Frenchay	512,874
West Midlands Region	
Coventry	671,923
Dudley	521,880
Hereford	333,752
Mid Staffordshire	440,312
North Staffordshire	836,470
South East Staffordshire	435,638
North Birmingham	241,903
Rugby	76,332
Sandwell	327,961
Shropshire	652,163
Wolverhampton	358,047
North Western Region	
Blackburn	384,252
Bolton	398,554
Burnley	508,649
Bury	204,670
Lancaster	477,389
North Manchester	350,322
South Manchester	630,832
Oldham	224,026
Preston	413,010
Rochdale	201,677
Tameside	230,469
Wigan	286,925
Special Health Authorities	
Eastman Dental Hospital	9,153
Hospitals for Sick Children	148,465
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	66,713

Incontinence

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he plans to take steps to improve the delivery of incontinence advice and supplies across the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what advice he has issued to health authorities on the need to provide a continence service; and how this will be affected by National Health Service and Community Care Bill;

(3) what information he has for each district health authority on *(a)* any restrictions that apply to the supply of incontinence pads to people living in (i) their own homes and (ii) residential homes *(b)* how much each district health authority spent on incontinence pads for the previous three years and how much for 1988 and 1989, *(c)* whether the district health authority has a written policy on continence drawn up in co-operation with the social services department and *(d)* how many continence advisers are employed by each district health authority;

(4) what training is required for prospective continence advisers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The advice given to health authorities on the provision of services to people suffering from incontinence was given in health notice (88) 26, a copy of which is in the Library. This advised health authorities to agree strategies with social services departments and to appoint continence advisers. This advice is unaffected by the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. Detailed information on local service provision is not held centrally.

Both health authorities and local authorities have discretionary powers to provide incontinence supplies and aids. The extent to which they exercise that discretion varies in the light of local needs and circumstances. There is no formal training requirement for continence advisers. the majority of them are registered general nurses. There is an English National Board training course (No. 978 "An introduction to the promotion of continence and management of incontinence") which a large proportion of continence advisers have taken either before or after taking up appointment.

Health Authorities

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the authorities replacing the district health authorities can be mandated to hold their business in public as currently.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: District health authorities will not be replaced. Our proposals aim to reform their membership. District health authority meetings will continue, as now, to be subject to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

North West RHA

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases were dealt with by Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley district health authority from 1979 to 1989 in *(a)* general medicine, *(b)* paediatrics, *(c)* geriatric medicine and *(d)* general surgery.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

Cases treated, Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley District Health Authority, 1979—1988-89

	General surgery	General medicine	Paediatrics[1]	Geriatric medicine
In-patient cases				
1979	6,088	5,634	1,916	1,015
1980	6,259	5,854	2,038	1,328

	General surgery	General medicine	Paediatrics[1]	Geriatric medicine
1981	6,160	6,385	2,710	1,636
1982	6,136	6,145	2,904	2,013
1983	6,577	6,563	2,974	2,439
1984	6,740	7,035	2,919	2,255
1985	6,772	7,352	3,060	2,385
1986	6,487	7,064	2,806	2,267
1987-88	6,473	8,319	3,224	2,509
1988-89	6,181	8,026	3,523	2,396
Day case admissions				
1979	397	553	2	0
1980	560	553	9	0
1981	650	920	1	0
1982	570	1,154	1	0
1983	553	1,037	5	0
1984	698	1,266	4	0
1985	708	1,365	6	0
1986	715	1,314	3	0
1987-88	986	1,108	4	0
1988-89	1,096	963	38	0
New out-patients				
1979	4,356	2,238	739	94
1980	4,547	2,200	688	123
1981	5,059	3,388	1,058	131
1982	4,989	4,050	946	119
1983	4,738	3,904	989	91
1984	4,855	3,968	1,085	114
1985	5,011	4,857	1,102	95
1986	5,034	4,951	1,147	100
1987-88	5,376	5,432	1,165	105
1988-89	5,458	5,289	1,065	115
Total out-patient attendances				
1979	13,731	15,428	5,327	345
1980	14,217	15,341	5,385	508
1981	14,806	20,001	6,976	773
1982	14,848	21,453	7,708	1,054
1983	14,004	23,382	8,168	1,089
1984	14,546	23,797	7,668	1,382
1985	14,338	25,402	7,218	1,745
1986	13,753	26,708	6,723	1,812
1987-88	15,029	26,253	6,216	2,159
1988-89	15,314	27,335	6,495	2,262

Source: 1979-1986 SH3 return.
1987-88 onwards, sH3a, KH09 and KP70 returns.
[1] Including special care baby unit(s).

Childhood Immunisation

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the most recent rates of uptake for childhood immunisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am pleased to say that the uptake rates for childhood immunisations in England continue to improve. In 1988-89, the overall uptake for measles increased to 80 per cent. (from 76 per cent. in 1987-88), and whooping cough reached 75 per cent. (from 73 per cent.). Uptake for diphtheria, tetanus and polio remained at 87 per cent. We believe that the actual improvement has been better than these figures indicate, because the 1987-88 returns included a small percentage of children above the age of two years, while those for 1988-89 are confined to those under that age.

A total of 85 English districts have now reached an average of 90 per cent. or more for diphtheria, tetanus and polio uptake, and 20 have done so for measles. A total of 56 districts have achieved 80 per cent. or more for whooping cough. Notifications for measles are at their lowest levels since records began, while the peak of the current whooping cough upsurge is likely to be very much lower than its predecessors.

We are planning to maintain this pace of improvement in 1989-90 and subsequent years. Renewed efforts will be made to ensure that immunisation uptake for 1989-90 and 1990-91 (the first two full years in which MMR vaccine has been available) achieves the target of 90 per cent. coverage sought by the World Health Organisation. Ninety per cent. is also the upper target for general practitioners in their new contract, which commences in April.

General Practitioner Contract

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will allow general practitioners to subtract contra-indications from target figures for cervical cytology and immunisation programmes under the new contract arrangements;

(2) if he will allow general practitioners to subtract informed dissenters from target figures for cervical cytology and immunisation programmes under the new contract arrangements;

(3) what consideration he has given to the effect on general practitioner-patient relationships of not allowing general practitioners to subtract informed dissenters and contra-indications from target figures for cervical cytology and immunisation programmes under the new contract arrangements;

(4) what information his Department has on the potential numbers of *(a)* informed dissenters and *(b)* contra-indications who will not take part in cervical cytology and immunisation programmes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The prevention of childhood diseases and cancer of the cervix is a high priority for the Government. We believe that the new target payment system will encourage GPs to improve levels of immunisation and screening and thereby reduce the incidence of these distressing diseases. The coverage levels at which target payments will be made have been set below 100 per cent. to allow for patients who, for any reason, do not wish to take advantage of these services. No data are available about the numbers of such patients but the experience of practices with high levels of cover suggests that the numbers are not great and that the higher level targets are achievable. The number of children who show contra-indications is small—less than 2 per cent. overall. The Government are satisfied that the new arrangements will have no deleterious effect on the relationship between patients and general practitioners.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will alter the general practitioner contract to allow a peer group of medical practitioners and not family practitioner committees to scrutinise cervical smear exclusion data.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We see no need for such arrangements. Family practitioner committees have a clearly defined management function in handling payment claims from doctors who are in contract with them.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will anonymise patient data from women who have undergone hysterectomies for the purpose of ensuring confidentiality under the new general practitioner contract target arrangements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The final details of the information that GPs will need to supply to family practitioner committees (FPCs) when claiming target payments have yet to be settled. No more information than is absolutely necessary for checking and audit purposes will be required by FPCs to approve the appropriate payments. All clinical information is treated on a confidential basis.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will exclude from general practitioner target payment figures nuns, virgins and women who do not wish to undergo a cervical smear.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. To exclude women who do not wish to be screened would not be consistent with the objective of the target payments scheme, which is to encourage GPs to point out the benefits to their patients of screening for cancer of the cervix. We believe it is a sensible precaution to include within the target scheme all women in the vunerable age group who have not had hysterectomies.

RU486 Drug

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any application has yet been received for a product licence in connection with the abortifacient drug RU486.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not usual practice to disclose information about whether or not an application for a product licence has been received or to give information about the progress of any such application.

Cook-Chill Food

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make public the full report of his Department's audit inquiry into the financial arrangements relating to Wakefield district health authority's cook-chill system of catering;

(2) when he expects his Department's director of audit to complete the audit of Wakefield district health authority's revenue and capital expenditure on the introduction of a cook-chill catering system.

Mr. Freeman: The director of audit expects the preliminary statutory audit visit to Wakefield district health authority, at which the cook-chill catering system is to be reviewed, to be completed in early April 1990.

We do not intend to make public any report that may be made by the Department's statutory auditor.

Wakefield DHA

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require a report from the chairman of Wakefield district health authority as to the reasons for and full cost of the recent meeting held by him, the authority's district general manager and commercial manager with Tillery Valley Foods in south Wales.

Mr. Freeman: This is a local issue for the health authority concerned. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Wakefield health authority, Mr. Hayward, for further information.

Nurses (Training)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses have received *(a)* basic training and *(b)* post-graduate training in the private sector in (i) 1980, (ii) 1987, (iii) 1988 and (iv) 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

In 1989 representatives from the English National Board, the Department of Health and the independent sector established a working group to identify the extent of the sector's input to pre-registration and post-registration nurse training; and to agree action to increase this input consistent with its demand for staff. The working group should report by the summer.

Preliminary findings by the group are that the independent sector does make a contribution to post-registration nurse training, placing some 200 nurses a year on about 23 different approved courses. In addition, at any one time, around 200 pre-registration NHS nurses are undergoing a short (anything from one to 12 weeks) placement in an independent hospital, generally free of charge.

Most training takes place in the National Health Service.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how often hospital waiting lists are collected; and if he will publish them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about hospital in-patient waiting lists is collected quarterly from health authorities. Booklets summarising the information and bulletins commenting on trends are published for the March and September quarters, maintaining a series of comparable figures back to September 1975.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the hospital in-patient waiting lists for 30 September 1989 will be published within six months of the collection date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We plan to publish the waiting list statistics by early April.

Patients (Treatment)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the number of in-patients treated immediately by referral and not recorded as waiting for treatment, and give this as a percentage figure of all patients treated.

Mr. Freeman: The information readily available indicates that in 1987-88 some 3 million (54 per cent.) of all acute admissions were not recorded as already waiting for in-patient treatment.

Agency Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the amount spent on *(a)* agency nurses and *(b)* agency clerical and administrative staff for the latest available year for each district health authority, special health authority and regional health authority and England as a whole.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the amount spent on agency staff for 1983, 1987, and the latest available year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is derived from the summarised annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in Engand together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals:

Total revenue expenditure on non-national health service (agency, etc.) staff

Year	*£000 (cash)*
1983-84	59,822
1987-88	211,436
[1]1988-89	252,167

[1] Latest available.

Notes:

1. The figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 excludes £2·4 million and £2·9 million respectively being similar costs charged to capital expenditure and which were not specifically identified in the accounts for earlier years.
2. The figure for 1983-84 includes a minor element from the administrative expenses of family practitioner committees (FPCs) which is not separately identifiable but is excluded from the figures for the more recent years.

As a result of various initiatives achieved or pending including: nurse clinical grading and improved London allowances; administrative and clinical local pay flexibility; flexible grading in scientific and professional staff groups and local pay flexibility for other staff groups the amount spent on agency staff should reduce in future.

The expenditure remains predominately in the Thames regions, which together with the London postgraduate SHAs accounted for some 76 per cent. of the national total (£252 million).

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the numbers of agency nurses used on the latest date for which figures are available and on comparable dates for the two preceding years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is as follows:

Number of agency nursing and midwifery staff (whole-time equivalent) in England

	Number
30 September 1988	6,240
30 September 1987	6,130
30 September 1986	5,450

Health and Social Service Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish, for the latest available year, the figures given in table 3.1 of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics, 1989".

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is shown in the table:

Health and personal social services manpower summary[1]

England

	Unit	*As at 30 September 1988*
Health service staff and practitioners, and local authority social services staff: Total		1,077,894
Health service staff and practitioners: Total		842,090
Directly employed staff: Total	Wte	793,391
Medical and dental staff[1]: Total		44,749
Hospital medical and dental staff: Total	Wte	40,643
Medical staff		37,559
Medical locum staff		1,852
Dental staff		1,183
Dental locum staff		48
Community health service medical and dental staff: Total	Wte	4,106
Medical staff		2,789
Medical locum staff		45
Dental staff		1,262
Dental locum staff		10
Nursing and midwifery staff: Total	Wte	403,883
Nursing staff: Total	Wte	380,265
Administrative staff		2,601
Centrally based services		1,854
Blood transfusion service		1,145
Hospital staff		330,669
Primary health care services[2]		37,295
Health visitor students		786
Agency nursing staff		5,915
Midwifery staff: Total	Wte	23,618
Administrative staff		198
Hospital staff		18,993
Community health services		4,106
Agency midwives		321
Professional and technical staff (excluding works): Total	Wte	79,775
Health authorities staff		78,203
Other statutory authorities staff		1,572
Works professional staff: Total	Wte	5,323
Health authorities staff		5,301
Other statutory authorities staff		22
Maintenance staff (building and engineering): Total	Wte	17,331
Health authorities staff		17,224
Other statutory authorities staff		107
Administrative and clerical staff[3]: Total	Wte	115,951
Health authorities staff		112,312
Other statutory authorities staff		3,639
Ambulance officers and control assistants	Wte	2,980
Ambulancemen/women		15,781
Ancillary staff: Total	Wte	107,618
Health authorities staff		107,051
Other statutory authorities staff		567
Family practitioner committee service: Practitioners: Total	No.	48,699
General medical practitioners: Total[4]	No.	27,419
Unrestricted principals		25,322
Restricted principals		159

	Unit	As at 30 September 1988
Assistants		253
Trainees		1,685
General dental practitioners: Total	No.	15,070
Principals		14,840
Assistants		230
Ophthalmic medical pratitioners[5]	No.	832
Ophthalmic opticians		5,378
Local authority social services staff:		
Total	Wte	235,804
Senior directing, managing, professional and advisory staff		5,846
Field social work staff		27,867
Other headquarters, area office and field staff		21,903
Home help service staff		59,968
Day care staff for adults		18,481
Day care staff for children		9,526
Residential care staff for adults		70,346
Residential care staff for children		18,292
Other staff		3,575

Note: Headquarters, blood transfusion centre and mass radiography unit staff are included in the group of staff to which they relate eg "Medical".

[1] Includes all full time, part-time, honorary, locum and agency locum staff, but excludes medical practitioners participating in hospital staff funds and occasional sessional staff in community health services.

[2] Includes District nurse students.

[3] Exludes ambulance officers and includes general managers.

[4] At 1 October.

[5] At 31 December. Dispensing opticians FPC contracts terminated 30 June 1986.

[6] All figures are provisional.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how he seeks to ensure that no member of the hepatitis B high risk group, as defined by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, or their family, is denied vaccination; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will institute a Government information and monitoring programme on hepatitis B and add hepatitis B to the screening study currently in progress on the incidence of AIDS and HIV; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether the Health Education Authority has any plans to conduct an education campaign on hepatitis B targeted at specific groups and their families as well as prescribing physicians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Health Education Authority is currently reviewing all its publications on sexually transmitted diseases, including information on hepatitis B.

Viral hepatitis B is a notifiable disease and the public health laboratory service continues to monitor its incidence. The Department does not believe additional monitoring or screening procedures are required. Reported cases to the PHLS for the last five years for which figures are available are shown in the table:

Acute hepatitis B; laboratory reports 1985-89

Year	Reported cases
1985	1,785
1986	1,329
1987	785
1988	644
1989	[1]608

[1] Figure provisional.

Note: Acute hepatitis B reported from laboratories in England, Wales and Ireland includes all illnesses with or without jaundice, diagnosed as acute hepatitis and confirmed as type B by positive hepatitis B surface antigen tests or other serological markers of current or recent infection.

These figures show a welcome decline in the incidence of the disease.

A new edition of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's memorandum, "Immunisation against Infectious Disease", to be issued shortly, will remind doctors of the high risk groups. However, the responsibility for ensuring vaccination is for occupational health services and for individual doctors, as appropriate.

Census

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the proposed forms of questionnaire which people will be required to complete in next year's census of the population.

Mr. Freeman: I have today laid before the House the Census Regulations 1990, which include reduced-size facsimilies of each of the census forms to be completed by the public in England and Wales. The regulations provide for the detailed arrangements necessary for the conduct of the census.

Corresponding Census (Scotland) Regulations 1990 have been laid before the House today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Cancer and Leukaemia

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of cancer and leukaemia confirmed in children in Great Britain.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: The data cover the years 1980-85, later data for Great Britain as a whole not yet being available.

Number of cases of (a) *all malignant neoplasms*[1] *(b) leukaemia*[2] *ages 0-14 years, Great Britain, 1980-85*

	(a) All malignant neoplasms		(b) Leukaemia	
Year	Males	Females	Males	Females
1980	666	515	204	161
1981	640	553	208	183
1982	625	502	204	173
1983	681	525	241	188
1984	670	549	217	181
[3]1985	619	472	197	152

[1] Assigned to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 140-208.

[2] Assigned to the 9th revision ICD codes 204-208.

[3] Provisional.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people in the area of the Pontefract health authority have been diagnosed or treated for cancer or cancer-related diseases including leukaemia over the past five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people in the area of the Wakefield health authority have been diagnosed or treated for cancer or cancer-related diseases including leukaemia over the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 March 1990]*: The exact information requested is not available.

The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) publishes annual cancer statistics using data collected by the 11 regional cancer registries and the Welsh cancer registry. Data concerning newly diagnosed cases of *(a)* malignant neoplasms and *(b)* leukaemias for Pontefract and Wakefield district health authorities (DHAs) are shown in the table, which covers the years 1982 (when DHAs were established) to 1985 (the latest year available):

Newly diagnosed cases of (a) malignant neoplasms[1] and (b) leukaemias[2] in Pontefract and Wakefield DHAs 1982-85

	Wakefield DHA		*Pontefract DHA*	
Year	*Malignant neoplasms*	*Leukaemias*	*Malignant neoplasms*	*Leukaemias*
1982	571	4	660	12
1983	535	7	621	16
1984	509	9	695	8
1985[3]	503	11	693	6

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 140-208.
[2] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 204-208.
[3] Provisional data.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons have benefited from a home responsibilities protection for retirement pension since 1978.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. Records are not kept of the number of persons whose awards of retirement pension had periods of home responsibilities protection taken into account.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will end the transitional payments scheme to people on pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on this subject on 12 February at column 89.

Benefits

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what specific financial efficiency and quality of service targets he has approved for *(a)* contributory national insurance benefits, *(b)* non-contributory national insurance benefits, *(c)* means-tested benefits and *(d)* the social fund.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In a statement to the House on 17 May 1989, my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced the publication of a definition of the service to be provided to the public and said that the definition would be backed up by specific targets for performance.

Subsequent to the statement on 17 May, national performance targets for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92, in terms of clearance times in working days (unless otherwise indicated) and percentage error rates, were lodged in the Library.

Targets for 1990-91 to 1992-93 are currently being reviewed.

There are no specific financial efficiency targets for individual benefits at present.

Administration Costs

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the unit cost of administering *(a)* contributory national insurance benefits, *(b)* non-contributory national insurance benefits, *(c)* means-tested benefits and *(d)* the social fund.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest information available is for the 1987-88 financial year. The unit cost of administering the following benefits in that year were:

	£
(a) Contributory national insurance benefits	66
(b) Non-contributory non-income-related benefits	14
(c) Income-related benefits	111

The social fund was introduced in a limited way in 1987-88 for funeral and maternity payments only, but no separate figures are available—the costs for 1987-88 are included in the overall income related benefits figure.

The unit costs are calculated by dividing the estimated administrative costs of the benefits involved by the average number of beneficiaries.

Hostels

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from hon. Members regarding the effects on claimants of different levels of housing benefit payable to residents in Salvation Army hostels in Nottingham, Grimsby and Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Hostel dwellers on income support became eligible for housing benefit from 9 October 1989. Since that date we have received a small number of representations about the level of housing benefit in Salvation Army hostels generally.

Benefit Payments (Part-weeks)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to pay, by direct payment, part-weeks of benefit *(a)* general and *(b)* where claimants are resident in hostels and are transient.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Part-week deductions from benefit for direct payment to third parties would be administratively complex and are not generally warranted. However, part-week deductions are available for claimants in night shelters.

Claimants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young claimants have so far gained extensions of benefit in order to prevent severe hardship; and how many who were pregnant.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of awards of income support to 16 and 17-year-olds on grounds of severe hardship for the period 12 September 1988 to 23 February 1990 is 16,206. Figures on the number of severe hardship directions made to those 16 and 17-year-olds who are pregnant have not been collected for this period. However, we are looking more closely at the situation of young pregnant girls.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people depended entirely on state benefits for their income in each of the years 1978 to 1989 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* in each local Department of Social Security area.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on 5 March at column *520*.

Benefit Changes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, in pursuance of the reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, *Official Report*, 20 February, column *675-76*, he will detail the number affected by the changes to national insurance benefits over the 1981 to 1988 period and give the cash effect and the cash effect in 1988 prices for each of the changes during 1988 to 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As stated in my reply to the hon. Member of 20 February 1990, details of the numbers affected by changes prior to 1988 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Details of the cash effect of the changes set out in the reply of 20 February are given in the table. All the changes were, in whole or in part, introduced part way through the year and details are therefore given for both the year of introduction and the year following.

Cash—£ million
(1988-89 prices in brackets)

	1988-89		*1989-90*		*1990-91*	
Unemployment benefit abatement for occupational/personal pension reduced from age 60 to 55	−15	(−15)	−63	(−59)	—	(—)
Weekly earnings rule introduced for unemployment benefit Unemployment benefit "full extent normal" rule—de minimis provision "Actively seeking work" test for unemployment benefit	—	(—)	−21	(−20)	−49	(−44)
Abolition of pensioners' earnings rule	—	(—)	190	(178)	375	(334)
Widows: revised entitlement conditions for women widowed before April 1988	—	(—)	[1]22	(21)	13	(12)

[1] First year expenditure included payments of arrears from April 1988.

Employers' National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what is his estimate of the total which should be collected and which has been collected in employers' national insurance contributions for the latest five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table shows the national insurance fund income expected from class 1 contributions (employees and employers schemes) compared with the contributions received from employers during the financial years from 1984-85 to 1988-89. The estimates were contained in the Government Actuary's reports which were laid before Parliament together with the draft Contributions Re-rating Orders for those years and exclude the SSP, SMP and abatement of contributions on SSP and SMP that employers were expected to recover from the Class 1 contributions they were due to remit.

(£ Thousands)

Year	*Estimated income from class 1 contributions*	*Total contributions received from employers*
1984-85	20,291,000	21,380,595
1985-86	22,687,000	22,564,779
1986-87	23,571,000	24,254,179
1987-88	25,577,000	26,522,035
1988-89	28,349,000	29,759,614

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many visits by his Department's national insurance inspectors were planned to employers' premises in each of the last 10 years; how many were made; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: National insurance inspectors conduct several thousand visits to employers each week to resolve inquiries and to investigate recording errors. In addition, inspectors conduct more searching visits in order to ensure compliance with social security legislation. Such visits are part of combined survey which, since 1986, has been undertaken in cooperation with Inland Revenue. No firm target was set for the overall number of visits because the time taken to complete them can vary widely but the expectation was to undertake around 100,000 each year. The actual number of these visits in each of the last three years was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1986-87	103,630
1987-88	92,034
1988-89	80,568

Figures for comparable visits undertaken in earlier years are not readily available.

Social Security Spending

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the expenditure change in real terms between 1979-80 and 1989-90 for each of the beneficiary groups in table 14.9 of the public expenditure White Paper; and what is the total expenditure change on benefits in real terms during the same period.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:*
The information is given in the table.

£ million

	1979-80 cash	*1979-80 at 1989-90 prices*	*1989-90*	*Percentage increase*
Elderly people	10,130	20,411	25,550	25
Sick and disabled people	2,780	5,601	9,520	70
Family	3,570	7,193	9,200	28
Unemployed people	1,470	2,962	4,740	60
Widows and orphans	760	1,531	1,240	−19
Total benefit expenditure	18,780	37,837	50,246	33

Commercial Consultants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department observes a ceiling for charge-out rates for work commissioned from commercial consultants.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The Department of Social Security does not observe a ceiling for charging-out rates for work commissioned from commercial consultants. The Department pays the appropriate commercial rate for the grade and quality of work to be undertaken.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of studies and reports commissioned from commercial consultants in each year 1978-79 to 1989-90, giving their total cost for each year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The total number of reports and studies on social security matters commisssioned from commercial consultants from 1986-87 onwards and their cost is in the table:

Year	*Number of reports and studies commissioned*	*Total cost of such work in that year (£ million)*
1986-87	12	0·620
1987-88	15	0·853
1988-89	21	1·372
1989-90	40	2·993

Records were not maintained in a form that enables information to be provided prior to 1986-87.

Expenditure up to and including the 1988-89 financial year has been from a joint health and social security budget. When the work involved both social security and health aspects the cost of the report or study has been apportioned accordingly.

Income Support

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants aged under 18 years are claiming income support in their own right; and if he will give details of each month's figures since the 1988 changes in entitlement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham., Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 26 October 1989 at col. *539-40* the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds claiming in their own right ceased to be collected after October 1988 and could now be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Monthly figures are available on the number of awards of income support under the severe hardship provision. These are shown in table A.

Our monitoring of the changes introduced in July 1989 gives monthly figures on the number of awards of income support to 16 and 17-year-olds other than under the severe hardship provisions. These are shown in table B.

Table A

Period ending	*Awards made*
30 September 1988	234
28 October 1988	311
25 November 1988	435
30 December 1988	647
27 January 1989	705
24 February 1989	760
31 March 1989	1,012
28 April 1989	799
26 May 1989	952
30 June 1989	1,133
28 July 1989	1,173
25 August 1989	1,250
29 September 1989	1,291
27 October 1989	795
24 November 1989	791
29 December 1989	895
26 January 1990	1,437
23 February 1990	1,386
Totals	16,206

Table B

Month Ending	*Awards made*
31 July 1989	645
31 August 1989	1,012
30 September 1989	1,008
31 October 1989	910
30 November 1989	753
31 December 1989	566
31 January 1990	868

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Apples and Pears

14. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the new arrangements made by apple and pear growers to organise research into their crops.

Mr. Curry: The new research body for apples and pears, the Apple and Pear Research Council, which came into being at the end of last year, has got off to an energetic start. It has already held an open meeting to which all

growers were invited in order to ensure that growers' views are fully taken into account in assessing the council's research priorities.

Farming (New Entrants)

15. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies he is pursuing to encourage new entrants into farming.

23. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actions he is taking to assist young farmers wishing to enter agriculture.

74. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to assist young farmers wishing to enter agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: My Department gives grants to young farmers under the farm and conservation grant regulations at rates 25 per cent. higher than for other farmers.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

16. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new evidence he has on the vertical transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Gummer: There is no evidence so far that maternal, that is dam to calf, transmission can take place. It does of course in sheep but not in any of the other species which may be affected by spongiform encephalopathy. We are conducting a major study, costing over £5 million, to determine the answer to this question.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what precautions his Department has taken relating to the offspring of bovine spongiform encephalopathy-stricken cattle.

Mr. Gummer: Despite the fact that there is no evidence of maternal transmission, as a precautionary measure any suspect animal that is pregnant must be isolated during and for 72 hours after calving and the placenta and other material burnt or buried. The accommodation used must then be cleaned and disinfected. In addition, as part of the comprehensive epidemiological inquiry into every case of BSE, data are collected in relation to calves of BSE-affected cattle.

More generally, the consumer is fully protected because all suspect animals are slaughtered and destroyed and those offals which are most likely to harbour the BSE agent are banned from human consumption even in animals where there is no indication of the presence of BSE.

Fruit

17. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the contribution of the Kingdom scheme to the marketing of English top fruit.

Mr. Curry: From its formation in 1980 the Kingdom scheme made a valuable contribution to both the promotion and marketing of top fruit.

Agriculture Workers

18. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest average weekly wage for full-time agriculture workers.

Mr. Curry: Average weekly earnings including benefits for full-time agricultural workers for the 12 months ending in June 1989 were £161·40. These are the latest figures which are available.

58. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time hired workers were employed in agriculture in Worcestershire during 1989.

Mr. Curry: County figures for 1989 are not yet available. The 1988 figures for Hereford and Worcester, taken from the June 1988 agricultural census, are as follows:

Hired workers	*Number*
Full-time	2,949
Part-time	1,293

Moorland Burning

19. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had about burning of moorland to regenerate heather.

Mr. Curry: We have had a number of discussions on conservation and agricultural practice on moorlands.

Ruminant Rations

20. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what opinions his Department has expressed to other European Community member states concerning the incorporation of meat and bonemeal in ruminant rations.

Mr. Gummer: We have kept our EC partners fully and regularly informed about the probable role of ruminant meat and bonemeal in the development of BSE and the measures we have taken to deal with the problem.

Food Irradiation

21. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received against the introduction of food irradiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I continue to receive letters about aspects of food irradiation, but no new considerations have arisen that are relevant to the Government's decision. The various issues have been thoroughly analysed and summarised with great clarity in the recent report from the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities.

53. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what major food manufacturers or supermarket chains have approached his Department requesting that the present ban on the sale in this country of irradiated foodstuff be lifted.

Mr. Maclean: I have received no such representations direct from food manufacturers or retailers. However, I am aware that the Food and Drink Federation was among those scientific, health, consumer and trade bodies that commend favourably on the introduction of food irradiation in evidence to the recent inquiry by the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities. The report of this inquiry is in the Library of the House.

79. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports from independent scientific committees he has received regarding the safety of food irradiation.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the correspondence on food irradiation he has received has been in favour of its introduction.

Mr. Maclean: The nature of the correspondence does not lend itself to this sort of analysis since many of the letters either raise, or seek information about, particular aspects of the subject.

Green Pound

22. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures are followed to achieve changes in green currency values.

51. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures are followed to achieve changes in green currency values.

Mr. Gummer: Changes to green currencies are proposed by the Commission and agreed by qualified majority in the Council of Ministers.

30. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next be discussing the green pound in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: The green pound will next be discussed at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 26-27 March.

34. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he will be taking to secure support in Europe for his proposals on the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I have made it clear to the Commission and the Council that I am seeking a substantial devaluation of the green pound and I will continue to pursue this objective in future negotiations, both in the Council of Ministers and elsewhere.

44. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with other European Community Ministers concerning the future of green currencies.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with other European Community Ministers concerning the future of green currencies.

Mr. Gummer: I have regular discussions with other Community Agriculture Ministers, in the Council of Ministers and elsewhere. At these meetings I make it clear that I am seeking a substantial devaluation of the green pound at this year's farm price review.

45. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what issues he will raise during his next European Council negotiations on the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I shall be pressing for a substantial devaluation at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers.

49. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the president of the National Farmers Union on the current state of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The president of the National Farmers Union has made his views on the green pound clear to me on a number of occasions. I have told him that I seek to secure a substantial devaluation of the green pound at this year's farm prices review.

56. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what commitments he has given to the National Farmers Union about his negotiating stance on the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I have indicated to the House and to the National Farmers Union that I am seeking a substantial devaluation of the green pound at this year's farm price review, and that I am committed to the complete removal of the difference between the green and market rates of exchange of the pound by the end of 1992 at the latest.

80. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received against Britain being granted a devaluation of the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I have received representations from various organisations drawing attention to the consequences of a devaluation of the green pound on food prices.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will tabulate, for each month since British accession to the European Community, the amount of divergence between British green pound rates weighted according to the value of production of each commodity group and overall exchange rates and the overall weighted impact to date of each divergence on British producer prices.

Mr. Curry: The information, in the form requested, is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to achieve *(a)* a devaluation and *(b)* the abolition of the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: I expect to secure a devaluation of the green pound at this year's farm price review. The Council and Commission are agreed that all monetary gaps, including the gap between the green and market rate for the pound, should be eliminated by 1992 at the latest.

Commercial Whaling

24. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the future of commercial whaling.

Mr. Curry: At present there is a moratorium on commercial whaling. The Department continues to receive many letters about the conservation of whales. We continue to work hard to safeguard this.

Rhizomania

25. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on rhizomania.

Mr. Curry: The Government remain determined to prevent the introduction and spread of rhizomania, which presents a serious threat to the sugar beet industry. We operate a range of import controls and carry out extensive annual surveys of beet fields. The disease was first identified in 1987 at a farm in Suffolk and two further outbreaks were identified last year in Norfolk. These farms are subject to strict control measures designed to prevent the spread of the disease.

Food Inspectorate

26. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to improve the food inspectorate.

Mr. Maclean: In the context of the requirements of the European Community directive on the official control of foodstuffs and of the Food Safety Bill, currently before Parliament, discussions will be held with representatives of enforcement authorities on any changes needed in the present arrangements for the inspection of foodstuffs.

Equine Exports

27. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of his efforts within the European Community to prevent the export of equines below set minimum values after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations on the Community's proposals on welfare conditions for animals in transit are still at a preliminary stage.

We have emphasised the importance that we attach to securing proper controls on trade in horses but it is clear that these will be difficult negotiations.

Eggs

28. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to assist in the marking of British-produced eggs.

Mr. Gummer: I have informed the industry that it is free to put origin terms on egg packs. As hon. Members will be fully aware, there are comprehensive measures in force in the United Kingdom to combat salmonella. I hope that similar measures will be taken throughout the EEC in the near future. Until then British eggs are subject to the toughest safety regulations in the Community.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any intention of banning the use of melange as a component which is included in raw liquid egg which is pasteurised for industrial use.

Mr. Maclean: Under European Community Council directive 89/437 of 20 June 1989 on hygiene and health problems affecting the production and the placing on the market of egg products, member states are required, before 31 December 1991, to bring into force regulations that, inter alia, will prohibit the use of broken eggs in products intended for human consumption.

Animal Feed

29. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being taken to provide more information concerning the ingredients in animal feed.

Mr. Maclean: A recent amendment to the European Community directive on the marketing of mixed feeds will oblige manufacturers to declare the materials used, though further work is necessary within the Community before this provision can be implemented by the member states.

The present regulations already permit manufacturers to give full information about ingredients and farmers who want this information should seek it from their suppliers.

Salmonella

31. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he is taking to assist egg producers whose flocks are found to be infected with salmonella.

Mr. Maclean: As announced in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on 13 February, *Official Report*, column *200*, the scales of values for calculating compensation, where infected flocks are compulsorily slaughtered, have been revised to reflect increases in commercial prices and will be kept under regular review in future.

Eastern Europe

32. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to visit eastern Europe.

Mr. Gummer: I visited Poland between 25 and 28 February 1990, and plan to go to Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria this month.

33. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives he is taking to assist in increasing food production in eastern European countries.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 8 February (*Official Report*, columns 1000-01). I have just returned from a visit to Poland, and shall be visiting Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria next week. Opportunities for visits to other eastern countries are being kept under review.

78. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of ways in which United Kingdom agriculture can respond to the food needs of eastern Europe.

Mr. Gummer: It is clear that British experience and expertise in the agriculture and food sectors can be of great benefit in enabling eastern Europe to meet its food needs. The previous Socialist economies were particularly damaging to food production and I am determined that

Britain should play its full part in their transformation into the free market. We are already working closely with Poland and Hungary and I hope to visit Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia shortly with a small specialist team. We are also encouraging British business men and farmers to make the most of the opportunities offered by these welcome changes.

Silage

35. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what efforts he is making to reduce pollution risks from silage.

Mr. Curry: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service provides free initial advice to farmers on ways to minimise pollution from silage; grants of 50 per cent. are available under the farm and conservation grant scheme for the construction and improvement of silage effluent facilities; and the Government are at present consulting on regulations that would set minimum construction standards for new and substantially reconstructed silage installations and which would provide a power to the National Rivers Authority to require improvements to existing installations; and the Government will shortly be introducing regulations setting minimum standards for new silage installations.

Beef

36. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the present state of the beef industry.

Mr. Curry: The 1989 June agricultural census showed an increase in the beef breeding herd to its highest level for a decade, for the first time fully offsetting the fall in the dairy herd. The December 1989 census showed a continuation of this trend, with a rise of 9 per cent. over the previous year. These figures indicate that producers' expectations remain high.

Consumer Panel

37. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his consumer panel will have its first meeting.

42. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the operation of his consumer panel.

70. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that consumer opinion is fully taken into account in formulating future food safety policy.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent arrangements he has made to improve the representation of consumer interests towards his Department.

Mr. Gummer: Following my announcement of 2 November 1989 (*Official Report*, columns *317-18*) we have established a consumer panel made up of ordinary consumers nominated by the main consumer bodies but appointed in an individual capacity. Its terms of reference are:

"To review matters relating to the implementation of food safety policies and to examine particular issues of concern to consumers".

The first meeting of the panel will take place in London on 12 March 1990. The names of the members are:

Mr. Phillip Bell, Edinburgh
Mrs. Dorothy Craig, Newcastle upon Tyne
Mrs. Harriet Kimbell, Guildford
Mrs. Susan Leather, Exeter
Mr. Patrick McCoy, Armagh
Mr. Gareth Morgan, Llanfairpwll, Gwynedd
Mrs. Wilma Mulliner, Weymouth
Mrs. Susan Payne, Bromley
Mrs. Noelle Whamond, Newton Stewart

I expect the panel to lead to a useful dialogue between consumers and Ministers on food safety issues.

We also wish to initiate periodic meetings in which we can bring together the leaders of consumer groups to consider a wide range of complex policy issues going much wider than the food safety issues on which the consumer panel will be concentrating. I am therefore writing today to 15 consumer bodies inviting them to a meeting in the Ministry next month.

We expect that these arrangements will strengthen contacts and enable Ministers to hear a wide range of consumer views directly. They supplement the well-established arrangements for consulting consumer bodies on particular issues and listening to their views.

Sheep Dip

38. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning organophosphorous sheep dips.

Mr. Maclean: A number of hon. Members and others have sought information from me and my Department about organophosphorous sheep dips.

As I told the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 25 January (*Official Report*, columns *821-22*), my Department will begin this year a review of ectoparasiticide product licences which will include licenced organophosphorous sheep dips.

Bottled Water

39. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on nitrate levels in *(a)* imported bottled water and *(b)* home-produced bottled water.

Mr. Maclean: No specific limits for nitrates are laid down under the EC natural mineral waters directive. Information available suggests that levels of nitrates in both imported and home-produced bottled water are below the maximum concentration of 50 mg/l set by the EC drinking water directive.

Animal Welfare

40. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve conditions of animal welfare throughout the European Community.

73. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to improve conditions of animal welfare throughout the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: In his written answer of 7 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) (*Official Report*, column *712*), my right hon. Friend

explained that the community has already taken some action on animal welfare. However, he made it clear that further action is needed in a number of areas so that all countries in the Community operate to the same high standards for the keeping and transport of farm anumals.

61. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on common European standards for animal welfare after 1992.

Mr. Maclean: As explained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 7 February, *Official Report*, column *712*, I am determined that high standards of animal welfare should be adopted throughout the European Community.

64. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications of the single European market for animal welfare.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission has made a number of proposals to harmonise standards of animal welfare in the Community, and will be making further proposals in due course. The implications will depend on the outcome of the negotiations, in which we shall be pressing for improved safeguards for animal welfare in a number of important areas.

Arable Farmers

41. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policy he is adopting towards the European Community price fixing which would be of advantage to arable farmers.

62. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies he is adopting at European Community price-fixing negotiations which would be of advantage to arable farmers.

Mr. Curry: We are seeking a substantial devaluation of the green pound; we are pressing for the basic cereals co-responsibility levy to be replaced by matching price cuts; and we are strongly supporting the Commission's proposals to maintain the present definition of double-low rapeseed for a further year.

European Community Agriculture Ministers

43. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met with European Community Ministers of Agriculture; and what was discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) on 7 March.

Dairy Sector

46. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, and with other industry leaders, to discuss the dairy sector.

Milk Marketing Board

47. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what marketing opportunities he envisages being created by reforming the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Curry: It is not for Government to identify marketing opportunities. But I am concerned that the milk marketing arrangements should encourage innovation and enable the industry to take advantage of changing market opportunities. I am encouraging the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trade Federation to pursue their discussions with a view to devising arrangements suited to the 1990s.

Tyrell Committee

48. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to implement any more of the recommendations of the Tyrell committee.

Mr. Gummer: Work is already in hand or planned on all the projects recommended by the Tyrell committee as urgent or of high priority. It is essential to devote expertise and resources to the priority work but we will keep the recommended research of a lower priority under review. In total the Government will be spending over £12 million in the next three years on BSE-related research.

Farmers (Countryside Custodians)

50. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies he is pursuing in order to emphasise to farmers their role as custodians of the countryside.

Mr. Curry: The Department provides a range of incentives including the environmentally sensitive areas, farm and conservation grants and farm woodland schemes, together with general and specialised advice on conservation aimed at encouraging farmers to protect and enhance the countryside.

Overseas Food Fairs

52. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which overseas food fairs and exhibitions his Department has attended since July 1989.

Mr. Curry: Since July 1989, the following fairs and exhibitions have been attended by Ministers and officials of my Department:

16 October 1989—Anuga food fair, Cologne
25 January 1990—Berlin green week
6 February 1990—ISM Sweets and biscuits fair Cologne

I regard it as most important that British companies should receive maximum encouragement in their efforts to penetrate overseas markets.

Herrings

54. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the volume of herrings landed in England and Wales last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Provisional figures for the volume of herrings landed in England and Wales in 1989 are 1,324 tonnes by United Kingdom and foreign vessels.

Veterinary Product Licensing

55. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the average British fees for veterinary product licensing; and what are the comparable level of fees levied in other EC countries.

Mr. Maclean: A wide range of fees is charged for veterinary medicines licensing based on an estimate of the full economic cost of assessing each type of application. I do not have sufficient information to make a useful comparison with fees charged in other EC countries or the basis on which they are set.

Covent Garden Market Authority

57. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Covent Garden Market Authority; and what was discussed.

Mr. Curry: I last met the chairman of the Covent Garden Market Authority on 1 March when we discussed a number of matters of mutual interest on the present and future operation of the market. I am now able to announce my conclusions following the study commissioned last year into the future of the Covent Garden market.

I have decided that in principle legislation should be presented, at a suitable opportunity, to dispose of the assets of the authority.

As foreshadowed in my reply to the hon. Member's question on 27 February, [*Official Report*, column *108*], I am today arranging for a summary of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

I am also today writing to the chairman of the Market Tenants Association to inform him of this decision and will see that tenants' views are taken into account in framing detailed proposals.

The authority will be shortly opening negotiations with the tenants about new leases to replace those that expire in March 1991.

Horticultural Research

59. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restructuring of horticultural research he has achieved in the last six months.

Mr. Curry: The Department is working closely with the Department of Education and Science and the Agricultural and Food Research Council, in consultation with representatives of the horticulture industry, to set up a new unified organisation for horticultural research based on a reconstituted British Society for Horticultural Research. The new BSHR will be the principal contractor for horticultural research and development in the United Kingdom and will carry out the bulk of Government-funded horticultural research. We believe the new organisation will provide both Government and industry with a more efficient and effective R and D service while maintaining the highest scientific standards.

Poultry Health Regulations

60. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has recently received about the Poultry Health Regulations.

Mr. Maclean: I have received representations on various aspects of the salmonella control measures, including the cost of testing, the effect on rare breed flocks and the level of compensation paid when flocks are compulsorily slaughtered. There has been recognition of the steps which the Government have been able to take in response to these concerns. Representations have also been received on the European Commission proposal for a Council regulation laying down health rules for the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat to replace European Community directive 71/118. Most of the representations have expressed concern about the need for the on-farm production of poultry meat and for uneviserated poultry.

Stubble Burning

63. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had about his intention to end stubble burning.

Mr. Curry: There have been discussions with the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association. These consultations, which are continuing, are focused on the scope of the limited exemptions foreseen in my right hon. Friend's statement of 30 November 1989 and on the strengthening of the National Farmers Union's code of practice in the period leading up to the proposed prohibition.

Food Safety

65. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's response to the recommendations in the report of the committee on the microbiological safety of food.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *398-99*.

Wheat and Bread

66. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends answering the question from the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West put down for answer on 18 January, asking for the comparative prices of wheat and bread over the last five years.

Mr. Curry: A reply was sent to my hon. Friend on 28 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *242*.

Pesticides

67. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his review of pesticides.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 8 February, *Official Report*, column *728*.

77. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Advisory Committee on Pesticides last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The Advisory Committee on Pesticides last met on 25 January. The main items discussed were: requests for approval of three new pesticides; reviews of four existing approvals; a draft code of practice for the use of pesticides on farms and holdings and two survey reports on pesticides usage in Scotland.

Beef Exports

68. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the amount of beef being exported to western Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The amount of beef exported from the United Kingdom to western Europe[1] in 1989 was 111,998 tonnes.

[1] EC and EFTA countries, Malta, Cyprus and Gibraltar

Reconstituted Meat

69. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking with regard to meat reconstituted with blood plasma gel.

Mr. Maclean: Should a company decide to use this technique for the preparation of meat products it would need to ensure that the product was safe and labelled in accordance with the Food Labelling Regulations 1984. This would apply equally to home-produced and imported products. In particular, those regulations require that food labels carry details of any process which the product has undergone where the omission of such detail would mislead the consumer, details of any ingredients used in the product which would include blood enzymes, and a name for the food which would distinguish it from any other foodstuff with which it might be confused.

Misleading labelling of food is an offence under the Food Act 1984. It is not for me to suggest particular forms of words for labels. A company would need to decide what description of this or any similar process would adequately explain to its intended customers the exact nature of the foodstuff. Trading standards officers are responsible for enforcing the law: I expect that they were already aware of the development of this process but my officials have drawn the matter to their attention.

The labelling rules apply equally to catering supplies as they do to retail sales. As part of its current labelling review I have already asked the Food Advisory Committee to look at the difficult matter of information provided to customers in restaurants, cafes or other catering outlets.

I was made aware only recently of the process that has been developed in the Netherlands but I have no indications that it produces a foodstuff which is unsafe.

The process has been developed by a very reputable Dutch institute and the data available so far to my Department do not indicate any need for us to enage in our own research.

It would be a commercial decision for a British company to choose to use this technique in the production of its meat products. I am not aware of any company that has so decided nor is it my understanding that any such products are currently being marketed in the United Kingdom, or in the Netherlands.

However, my Department is monitoring developments closely and I will take any further action that seems appropriate in the interests of either food safety or consumer protection.

National Farmers Union AGM

71. **Mr. Michael Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on his recent visit to the annual general meeting of the National Farmers Union at Kensington town hall.

Mr. Gummer: I was very glad to have the opportunity to address the annual general meeting of the National Farmers Union. Copies of my speech are in the Library of the House. I underlined the vital role which farmers play in our national life: as an efficient and competitive industry, as the guarantors of our food supply and as the guardians of our countryside. I also made plain our determination to ensure that United Kingdom farmers have a fair deal in Europe, in particular through a substantial devaluation of the green pound.

Consumers Association

72. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Consumers Association to discuss food-related issues; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend last met the Consumers Association on 15 January 1990. They discussed a wide range of issues including the Food Safety Bill, food irradiation and the Department's consumer panel.

Milk Quota

75. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he will be seeking EC approval for in respect of the distribution of additional milk quota in 1990.

Mr. Gummer: My proposals were that quota should be allocated to producers who received awards from the dairy produce quotas tribunal which were scaled back and have not yet been fully implemented; to smaller producers; to producers in remote areas, principally the islands of Scotland and the Scilly Isles; and to new entrants. The Commission raised a number of points in connection with these proposals. With one exception, which concerns my proposal to loan quota to new entrants rather than grant it outright, all points of difficulty have now been satisfactorily resolved and I am awaiting formal Commission agreement. Regulations will then be laid before Parliament and the majority of the quota issued before the end of the current quota year.

Farmers' Unions

76. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met leaders of the farmers' unions; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I meet leaders of the farmers' unions frequently to discuss various agricultural matters.

I met the presidents of the National Farmers Union, the Scottish National Farmers Union and the Ulster Farmers Union on 30 January to discuss the state of the agriculture industry and the European Community's farm price proposals.

Set-aside Scheme

81. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much land has been included in the set-aside scheme; and what is the cost to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Curry: A total of 110,000 hectares of land has so far been set aside in the United Kingdom. The cost of payments in the current financial year is about £11 million.

Industrial Wastes

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to require industrial wastes presently being dumped in the North sea to be stored on land until land-based disposal facilities have been developed.

Mr. Curry: No. As my right hon. Friend announced on 22 February, *Official Report*, column *899*, it is our intention that, with two possible short-term exceptions, industrial wastes will not continue to be dumped at sea after 1992. In certain circumstances short-term storage may have a useful part to play in waste management, but in general it is neither practicable nor environmentally desirable for the industrial wastes which are currently dumped at sea.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many licences to dump chemical industrial wastes in the North sea will be terminated by 31 December 1992; and how many will continue to be in force:

(2) what percentage of chemical industrial wastes dumped in the North sea will be terminated by 31 December 1992; and what percentage will continue.

Mr. Curry: It is my intention that all licences to dispose of industrial wastes in the North sea covered by the 1987 North sea declaration will be terminated by 31 December 1992. For two of the wastes, however, involving 77 per cent. of the current total annual licensed tonnage, it might not be technically feasible to meet this deadline. I will extend the licences for these last two wastes into 1993 only if absolutely necessary on technical grounds and for the shortest possible part of that year.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the continued use of organophosphorous sheep dips.

Mr. Maclean: As I told the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 25 January *Official Report*, column *821* my Department will begin this year a review of ectoparasiticide product licences which will include licensed organophosphorous sheep dips.

Veterinary Surgeons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his Department's future plans for training veterinary surgeons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The arrangement of courses for those wishing to obtain veterinary degrees is a matter for the veterinary colleges. My Department ensures that the veterinary surgeons which it employs are properly trained for their duties. The action which the Government are taking in response to the Page committee's report on the review of veterinary manpower and education was announced in a reply given to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 31 January.

Poultry (Slaughter)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate what the total value of the birds compulsorily slaughtered under the provisions of the Zoonoses Order 1989 and the Animal Health Act 1981 would have been had they been sent to processors for use as cooked poultry meat.

Mr. Maclean: Estimates relating to this hypothetical situation are not available.

Mr. J. J. Cato

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the man hours taken by officials in his Department in their administrative, clerical and legal functions relating to Mr. J. J. Cato's application for a decommissioning grant and the subsequent legal actions and appeals.

Mr. Maclean: The information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total cost of his Department's legal expenses to date in the case of J. J. Cato *v.* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Maclean: Payments of stationery costs and counsel's fees in the case brought by Mr. J. J. Cato were £6,058.

Spent Hens

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the typical sale price for a spent hen currently paid to an egg producer by a processor.

Mr. Curry: We estimate that the typical selling price for an end-of-lay hen is currently between 55p and 60p.

Fish Catches

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reasons he ascribes to the substantial drop in volume of fish catches off the Tyneside coast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The fall in landings in the first two months of 1990 at the main north-east coast ports compared with the same period in 1989 largely reflects the recent bad weather. During 1990 as a whole another factor will be that as North sea round fish stocks, in particular of cod and haddock, are lower total allowable catches in 1990 have been reduced to assist the recovery of such stocks.

Food Advisory Committee

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Food Advisory Committee last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The independent Food Advisory Committee last met on 25 January 1990 when it discussed matters concerned with its review of food labelling; the use of the preservative thiabendazole; the presence of tin in canned foods and the second food surveillance group report on plasticisers levels in food contact materials in food. Subsequently it held a joint meeting with the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes to discuss matters of mutual interest.

North Sea Haddock

Mr. Cran: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements are being made to reduce United Kingdom fishing for North sea haddock in 1990.

Mr. Curry: At its meeting last December, the EC Council of Fisheries Ministers and the Commission agreed that, because of the seriously depleted state of the North sea haddock stock, any member state with a quota exceeding 10 per cent. of the Community share of the stock should reduce its fishing for that stock in 1990 by 30 per cent. The United Kingdom's 1990 quota is 87 per cent. of the Community's share of the stock.

Following consultations with fishing industry organisations, we have decided that United Kingdom vessels over 10 m overall length which in 1989 landed more than 40 tonnes of North sea haddock and more than 10 per cent. of whose total landings in 1989 consisted of North sea haddock should either not fish in the North sea on more than 92 days during the remainder of this year or be limited, when fishing for demersal fish in the North sea, to using and carrying gear with 110 mm mesh and of specified conformation designed to ensure that it is substantially more selective than the 90 mm mesh nets normally permitted for demersal fisheries in the North sea.

Landings of North sea haddock by vessels not covered by these new arrangements will be subject to restrictions designed to avoid any increase in effort against this stock. Producer organisations (POs) with sectoral allocations of North sea haddock are also being asked to regulate their members' landings so that they do not take more than 60 per cent of their allocations by 1 July and no more than 85 per cent. by 1 October: fishing by the non sector will be regulated similarly.

To maximise the effectiveness of these arrangements, we are laying before Parliament a statutory instrument to extend licensing to fishing in the North sea for any species by United Kingdom vessels of over 10 m.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I believe that fishermen will accept that these controls are necessary in the longer-term interests of all those who rely on the North sea haddock fishery. The reduction in the 1990 total allowable catch (TAC) and quotas for this stock needs to be supplemented with reductions in effective effort in order to ensure that the intended gains from reducing the TAC are achieved. Without such action there would be a serious risk of a total collapse in the North sea haddock stock. The paramount importance of conserving our fish stocks was supported by both sides of the House in recent debates.

Compound Feedstuffs

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans he plans he has to require the manufacturers of compound feedingstuffs to show all raw materials used on the labelling of their products;

(2) what requirements control the labelling of the raw materials for compound feedingstuffs; and what substances are permitted under the generic descriptions oil, protein, fibre and ash.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The current Feedingstuffs Regulations 1988 permit manufacturers to give full declaration of raw material ingredients in compound feedingstuffs and farmers who want this information should seek it from their suppliers. A recent amendment to the EC directive on the marketing of mixed feeds will make it obligatory for all manufacturers to declare the materials used. Analytical declarations of protein, oil, fibre and ash are already required for the total feedingstuff regardless of the individual ingredients and provide indications of feeding value (protein), digestible energy content (oil and fibre) mineral or non-assimilable content (ash). Procedures for determining these parameters are laid down in the Feedingstuffs (Sampling and Analysis) Regulations 1982.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 9 March 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make representations to the examining boards to return the start of General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations to the end of May.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has asked for a meeting with the joint council for the General Certificate of Secondary Education to discuss this matter, among others.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations took place with him on the decision of the examining boards to bring forward to mid-May the start of the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The General Certificate of Secondary Education examining groups, which are independent bodies and collectively set the timetable for examinations, have not so far held discussions with my right hon. Friend about this, though contacts have taken place at official level. My right hon. Friend has made clear to the joint council for the General Certificate of Secondary Education his concerns about the timetable and looks forward to an early discussion with them.

School Places (Bath)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the High Court judgment in the case of Beechen Cliff school in Avon, he will now reconsider Avon county council's plans for the number of overall places in the Bath area.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Yes.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, under the terms of the model funding agreement for city technology colleges, he is precluded on termination of the agreement from requiring the repayment specified in paragraph 23(iv), so that the college continues to operate on a private fee-paying or any other basis with the characteristics set out in paragraph 4 of the model agreement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 54 to 59 of the model funding agreement which set out the course of action which the Secretary of State shall take in the event, inter alia, of the CTC/CCTA company not meeting the conditions and requirements of payment of grant to the CTC/CCTA by the Secretary of State. If, in these circumstances, the Secretary of State is not satisfied by responses sought and received from the CTC/CCTA company, paragraph 58 of the agreement provides that he shall give 12 months written notice of his termination of the agreement and that "He shall also give notice that the provisions of section 105(5) (of the Education Reform Act 1988) shall apply, and set out how the CTC/CCTA is to comply with them". Section 105(3) of the Education Reform Act provides that the conditions and the requirements in the agreement include that no charge is made for admission to the CTC/CCTA.

Pre-school Education

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will review the availability and quality of pre-school education in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Pre-school education in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. It is for local authorities in England to determine the most appropriate patterns of pre-school provision for their area. A committee of inquiry under my chairmanship is considering the quality of the educational experience offered to three and four-year-olds across various settings.

TRANSPORT

Medway (Dredging)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Medway Ports Authority sought his approval under sections 60 or 73 of the Port of London Authority Act before commissioning dredging and associated works in the Medway approach channel; on what date approval was given; and whether he imposed any conditions or restrictions relating to the deposit or laying down of dredgings and spoil.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Secretary of State's approval has not been sought to dredging in the Medway approach channel. I understand that the Port of London Authority granted a licence for such dredging to the Medway Ports Authority on 18 September 1989 under section 73 of the Port of London Authority Act 1968.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Medway Ports Authority sought his approval, under section 36 of the Medway Ports Authority Act 1975, before dumping dredgings in the area known as Lappel Bank in the Medway approach channel; on what date approval was given; and whether he imposed any conditions or restrictions.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Medway Ports Authority sought the Secretary of State's approval on 6 February 1990 under section 36(2) of the Medway Ports Authority Act 1973 to deposit 26,000 cu m of dredged spoil from within the port below the level of mean high water springs at Lappel Bank, Sheerness.

The authority had already sought the Secretary of State's approval on 5 July 1989 under section 34 of the Coast Protection Act 1949 to reclaim 120·34 acres of the Lappel Bank foreshore, using 2·6 million cu m of spoil dredged from the Medway approach channel.

The authority was advised on 22 September 1989 that there were no navigational objections to the proposed

works. Approval under section 36(2) of the 1973 Act was granted to deposit material, as specified in the authority's application of 6 February, on 2 March without any conditions or restrictions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the importance of the Medway approach channel and Lappel Bank for wildlife and its fulfilment of the criteria for protection under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Transport in relation to the works on these sites were limited to considering their effects on safety of navigation.

National Bus Company

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department received the draft report from the National Audit Office on the sale of the National Bus Company.

Mr. Portillo: The draft report on the sale of the National Bus Company was submitted to the accounting officer by the Comptroller and Auditor-General on 12 February 1990.

Speeding Traffic

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce further measures to curb speeding traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: As I stated in my reply to my hon. Friend on 5 March, *Official Report*, column *165*, I hope to introduce the new road hump regulations to come into force before Easter. In addition, we shall shortly be consulting on proposals to facilitate the introduction of 20 mph speed-limited zones in residential areas.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list *(a)* for May 1989 and *(b)* to date the establishment for the (i) Hereford, (ii) South Yorkshire, (iii) Worcester and (iv) Humberside valuation and community charge tribunals; and if any changes are envisaged for the near future;

(2) if he will list for *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1987 the establishment for the (i) Humberside, (ii) South Yorkshire, (iii) Worcester and (iv) Hereford local valuation panel.

Mr. Chope: The establishments of the three valuation and community charge tribunals are as follows:

	Hereford and Worcester	*South Yorkshire*	*Humberside*
1980	6	5	3
1985	6	5	4
1987	6	4	4
May 1989	7	5	7
March 1990	7	5	7

The establishments of all valuation and community charge tribunals are to be kept under review in relation to the volume of appeals that they handle.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he made the Community Charge Transitional Relief Report (England) available in the Vote Office.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 7 March 1990]:* The report was laid on 15 February and copies were placed in the Library. I understand that the Vote Office made the normal arrangements to obtain copies of the report and that 500 copies were made available on 17 February.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of capital allocations which have been issued to each class of local authority for the years 1981-82 to 1989-90 for *(a)* housing, *(b)* personal social services, *(c)* education, *(d)* transport and *(e)* other services.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today laid tables giving the information requested in the Library.

Blind and Deaf-blind People

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements his Department has made to inform the blind and the deaf-blind about the community charge.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today announced that the Department of the Environment is providing funding of £60,000 to enable the Royal National Institute for the Blind to produce Government information leaflets on the community charge in forms accessible to blind and partially sighted people.

Two key information leaflets will be produced on compact cassette tape and in braille and Moon writing. A further two leaflets will be produced, on tape only.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for Northern Ireland for each year since 1974-75 (i) total National Health Service expenditure, (ii) current expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iii) capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iv) expenditure on the family practitioner services, (v) expenditure on centrally funded National Health Service services, and (vi) expenditure on personal social services, giving each in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and *(c)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator; and if he will place in the Library details of the methods used to make these adjustments.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is contained in the tables.

Table A
Gross expenditure (Northern Ireland) in £ million (cash)

	Total excluding personal social services	Hospital and community health services		Family practitioner services	Central health and miscellaneous services[1]	Other health service capital	Personal social services
		Current	Capital		Current		
1974-75	134·8	93·5	7·8	26·7	6·7	0·1	19·4
1975-76	186·8	131·6	12·4	34·7	7·9	0·2	27·4
1976-77	221·7	153·7	14·4	40·6	12·7	0·3	31·1
1977-78	242·9	169·9	15·1	47·0	10·8	0·1	37·8
1978-79	279·8	195·5	17·5	54·1	12·3	0·4	46·8
1979-80	338·2	240·0	20·8	63·4	13·6	0·4	58·9
1980-81	429·0	308·5	20·4	80·4	19·2	0·5	74·0
1981-82	483·2	344·7	22·3	93·0	22·2	1·0	83·8
1982-83	521·2	368·4	21·5	105·7	24·6	1·0	92·1
1983-84	561·0	395·1	22·0	116·8	26·4	0·7	99·8
1984-85	592·0	415·0	22·4	123·2	30·5	0·9	103·4
1985-86	616·5	435·2	21·2	127·4	31·5	1·2	111·5
1986-87	664·8	463·2	24·8	139·2	36·2	1·4	116·5
1987-88	723·0	502·9	26·0	156·0	36·8	1·3	122·2
1988-89	794·3	547·8	31·0	174·9	39·5	1·1	133·7
1989-90 (plan)	860·3	591·1	31·5	191·3	44·4	2·0	144·4

[1] Includes Departmental Administration.

Table B
Gross expenditure (Northern Ireland) in £ million (purchasing power at 1988-89 prices)

	Total excluding personal social services	Hospital and community health services		Family practitioner services	Central health and miscellaneous services[1]	Other health service capital	Personal social services
		Current	Capital		Current		
1974-75	617·2	434·7	30·5	117·70	—	0·4	74·7
1975-76	664·1	474·9	37·1	119·30	—	0·6	87·6
1976-77	696·1	487·5	38·5	125·60	—	0·8	87·7
1977-78	699·8	496·3	35·3	133·90	—	0·2	97·3
1978-79	730·3	521·0	36·6	136·40	—	0·8	111·2
1979-80	734·9	530·6	36·1	135·20	—	0·7	118·7
1980-81	735·7	533·1	28·1	140·40	—	0·7	124·0
1981-82	763·9	550·5	29·8	146·80	—	1·3	124·9
1982-83	771·9	552·2	28·3	154·00	—	1·3	128·1
1983-84	791·6	563·4	28·3	161·09	—	0·9	131·7
1984-85	788·0	559·4	27·7	159·40	—	1·1	131·1
1985-86	779·9	557·9	24·8	157·10	—	1·4	133·9
1986-87	790·4	555·4	27·6	163·10	—	1·6	133·5
1987-88	796·0	555·7	17·5	171·00	—	1·4	130·4
1988-89	794·3	547·8	31·0	174·90	—	1·1	133·7
1989-90 (plan)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	n/a	n/a

[1] These figures have not been calculated because the heading covers such a wide variety of items (eg. training, grants to voluntary bodies, welfare foods, welfare foods, research) that a single inflation factor would be meaningless.
Note: Specific inflation figures are not available, and HCHS (capital) figures have been used.

Table C
Gross Expenditure (Northern Ireland) in £ million (real terms at 1988-89 prices) (expenditure adjusted using GDP deflator)

	Total excluding personal social services	Hospital and Community Health Services		Family Practitioner Services	Central Health and Miscellaneous Services Current	Other Health Service Capital	Personal Social Services
		Current	Capital				
1974-75	532·3	369·2	30·8	105·4	26·5	0·4	76·6
1975-76	586·6	413·3	38·9	109·0	24·8	0·6	86·0
1976-77	614·3	425·9	39·9	112·5	35·2	0·8	86·2
1977-78	591·3	413·6	36·8	114·4	26·3	0·2	92·0
1978-79	615·3	429·9	38·5	119·0	27·0	0·9	102·9
1979-80	636·8	451·9	39·2	119·4	25·6	0·8	110·9
1980-81	682·6	490·8	32·5	127·9	30·5	0·8	117·7
1981-82	700·2	499·5	32·3	134·8	32·3	1·4	121·4
1982-83	704·4	497·9	29·1	142·9	33·2	1·4	124·5
1983-84	724·4	510·2	28·4	150·8	34·1	0·9	128·9
1984-85	728·3	510·5	27·6	151·6	37·5	1·1	127·2
1985-86	719·8	508·1	24·8	148·7	36·8	1·4	130·2
1986-87	750·8	523·1	28·0	157·2	40·9	1·6	131·6
1987-88	775·4	539·4	27·9	167·3	39·5	1·4	131·1

	Total excluding personal social services	Hospital and Community Health Services		Family Practitioner Services	Central Health and Miscellaneous Services Current	Other Health Service Capital	Personal Social Services
		Current	Capital				
1988-89	794·3	547·8	31·0	174·9	39·5	1·1	133·7
1989-90 (plan)	804·0	552·4	29·4	178·8	41·5	1·9	134·7

Home Help Service

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of the annual expenditure incurred by the Eastern health and social services board is accounted for by the home help service.

Mr. Needham: The answer is 2·86 per cent. of the revenue expenditure in the year ended 31 March 1989.

Family Benefits

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many families in Northern Ireland were in receipt of *(a)* family credit and *(b)* income support in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: The available information is as follows:

	1987	1988	1989
(a) family credit	[1]—	[2]14,507	[3]14,909
(b) income support [4]	[5]56,982	[6]51,500	n.y.a.

[1] Family credit was introduced in April 1988.
[2] As at December 1988.
[3] As at December 1989.
[4] Source: 5 per cent. sample.
[5] As at May 1987.
[6] As at May 1988.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the number of families in Northern Ireland who have claimed family credit; what estimate he has as to what proportion of those eligible this represents; and what proposals he has for improving take-up.

Mr. Needham: The number of families receiving family credit at 21 February 1990 was 14,699. No reliable estimate of the eligible family credit population in Northern Ireland is available, but the position on take-up is being monitored and further publicity to improve it will be arranged as necessary.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average length of time taken to process claims for family credit in Northern Ireland local social security offices.

Mr. Needham: Family credit is administered centrally by family credit branch, DHSS, and the average time taken to process claims is 14 days for claims by employed persons and 23 days for claims by self-employed persons.

Licensed Premises

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of his Department's consultation papers, "Metrication: Sales of Spirits on Licensed Premises", were sent out last September; to whom were they sent; how many responses he received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Economic Development issued its consultation paper "Metrication: Sales of Spirits for Consumption on Licensed Premises" to 35 trade and other bodies.

Those consulted were: ACE Catering Equipment, Association of Wholesalers to the Licensed Trade of Northern Ireland, Bass Ireland Ltd., Belfast and Ulster Licensed Vintners Association, Bromac UK (Distributors) Ltd., CK Supplies Ltd., Catering Industry Training Board (Northern Ireland), Confederation of British Industry (NI), Council on Alcohol Related Problems, Department of Health and Social Services, Department of the Environment, Derry and District Licensed Vintners Association, Federation of the Retail Licensed Trade Northern Ireland, General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, W. A. Gilbey (Ireland) Ltd., Health Promotion Unit, Hollywood and Donnelly Ltd., Irish Bonding Co. Ltd., Irish Distillers Group PLC, James McAllister and Son Ltd., James McCabe Ltd., McGarry and Campbell, Nicholas McKenna and Company, John McKibbin and Son Ltd., T. McLaughlin Ltd., McNeill Glassware (Lisburn) Ltd., Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Northern Ireland Chamber of Trade, Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol, Northern Ireland Hotels and Caterers Association, Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Northlands Centre, Tyrone Bar Supplies Ltd. and United Bar Supplies Ltd.

Five replies were received.

We now propose to introduce legislation for a single metric measure of 25 ml.

Kilroot Power Station

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of maintenance of the equipment stored at Kilroot power station, Carrickfergus, for use on the second phase of this development; and what is the total cost of maintenance to date of this equipment.

Mr. Needham: The cost in 1989 of storing and maintaining this plant was £1·45 million, bringing the total cost since 1979 to £14·55 million.

Rail Sleeper Services

Mr. Roy Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representation he has made to BR about the London-Stranraer overnight sleeper service.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have told British Rail of the adverse reaction in Northern Ireland to the decision. I understand that British Rail plans to provide a connecting service between Stranraer and the Glasgow to London sleeper trains.

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the record of each social security office's operation of the social fund in terms of the priority levels of cases in which they have awarded assistance indicating dates in which priority coverage has been changed.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 March 1990]:* The information is as follows:

Social Security Office	Loans						Community care grants					
	All priority categories		High and medium priority		High priority		All priority categories		High and medium priority		High priority	
	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To
Andersonstown	11.4.88 – 16.1.89	30.5.88 – 12.4.89	1.6.88 – 13.4.89 – 15.9.89 –	31.10.88 – 17.5.89 – 7.1.90	1.11.88 – 18.5.89 – 8.1.90 –	15.1.89 – 14.9.89	11.4.88 – 3.4.89 – 3.11.89 –	2.4.89 – 12.4.89 – 7.1.90	18.5.89 – 8.1.90 –	2.11.89 – 18.2.90	13.4.89 – 19.2.90 –	17.5.89
Antrim	11.4.88 –	19.6.88	13.2.89 –	16.4.89	20.6.88 – 17.4.89 –	12.2.89	11.4.89 –	8.5.89	8.6.89 – 2.10.89 –	16.7.89	9.5.89 – 17.7.89 –	7.6.89 – 1.10.89
Armagh	11.4.88 – 31.7.89 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –	30.7.89	—	—	11.4.88 –		—	—	—	—
Ballymena	—	—	11.4.88 – 17.10.88 – 1.8.89 –	18.9.88 – 30.11.88	19.9.89 – 1.12.88 –	16.10.88 – 31.7.89	—	—	11.4.88 – 1.6.89 –	9.5.89	10.5.89 –	31.5.89
Ballymoney	11.4.88 –	16.10.88	17.10.88 –	11.4.88	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ballynahinch	11.4.88 –	16.2.89	17.2.89 – 22.6.89 – 14.8.89 – 5.2.90 –	30.4.89 – 18.7.89 – 12.12.89	1.5.89 – 19.7.89 – 13.12.89 –	21.6.89 – 13.8.89 – 4.2.90	11.4.88 –	6.6.89	7.6.89 – 14.9.89 – 5.2.90 –	18.7.89 – 10.10.89 – 19.2.90	19.7.89 – 11.10.89 – 20.2.90 –	13.9.89 – 4.2.90
Banbridge	—	—	11.4.88 – 19.10.88 – 4.9.89 –	17.8.88 – 13.7.89	18.8.88 – 14.7.89 –	18.10.88 – 3.9.89	11.4.88 – 4.9.89 –	17.8.88	18.8.88 –	3.9.89	—	—
Bangor	11.4.88 – 4.1.89 –	2.5.88 – 2.4.89	13.5.88 – 3.4.89 –	3.1.89	3.5.88 –	12.5.88	11.4.88 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –		—	—
Carrickfergus	—	—	11.4.88 – 1.8.89 –	21.5.89	22.5.89 –	31.7.89	11.4.88 –	17.12.89	18.12.89 –		—	—
Coleraine	—	—	11.4.88 – 22.8.88 –	14.8.88	15.8.88 –	21.8.88	—	—	11.4.88 –		—	—
Cookstown	—	—	11.4.88 – 21.11.88 –	14.8.88 – 21.5.89	15.8.88 – 22.5.89 –	20.11.88	11.4.88 –	8.1.89	—	—	9.1.89 –	
Corporation Street	11.4.88 – 23.1.89 –	21.7.88 – 2.4.89	22.7.88 – 3.4.89 –	22.1.89	—	—	11.4.88 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –		—	—
Downpatrick	11.4.88 –	26.6.88	18.7.88 –		27.6.88 –	17.7.88	11.4.88 – 1.10.89 –	20.4.89	21.4.89 –	30.9.89	—	—
Dungannon	11.4.88 –	31.10.88	1.11.88 – 4.12.89 –	20.11.88	21.11.88 –	3.12.89	11.4.88 –	21.3.89	22.3.89 – 2.10.89 –	18.5.89	19.5.89 –	1.10.89
Enniskillen	11.4.88 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –	20.8.89	21.8.89 –		11.4.88 – 23.5.89 –	2.4.89 – 19.6.89	3.4.89 – 20.6.89 –	22.5.89	—	—
Falls Road	—	—	11.4.88 –	25.7.88	26.7.88 –		21.11.88 –	1.5.89	11.4.88 – 2.5.89 –	20.11.88 – 1.8.89	2.8.89 –	
Holywood Road	11.4.88 –	8.6.88	9.6.88 – 30.9.88 –	14.6.88 – 31.7.89	15.6.88 – 1.8.89 –	29.9.88	11.4.88 –	22.12.88	21.12.88 –	16.5.89	17.5.89 –	
Kilkeel	11.4.88 – 29.4.89 –	18.1.89 – 1.10.89	19.1.89 – 2.10.89 –	25.4.89	26.4.89 –	28.4.89	11.4.88 – 29.4.89 –	18.1.89 – 1.10.89	19.1.89 – 2.10.89 –	25.4.89	26.4.89 –	28.4.89
Knockbreda	—	—	11.4.88 – 9.10.89 –	30.11.88 – 2.1.90	1.12.88 – 3.1.90 –	8.10.89	11.4.88 –	9.4.89	—	—	10.4.89 –	
Larne	—	—	11.4.88 – 5.1.90 –	18.10.89	19.10.89 –	4.1.90	11.4.88 –		—	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	11.4.88 –	13.8.89	14.8.89 –		—	—	11.4.88 – 26.6.89 –	9.5.89	10.5.89 –	25.6.89
Lisburn	11.4.88 –		—	—	—	—	11.4.88 – 6.6.89 –	21.5.89	—	—	22.5.89 –	5.6.89
Londonderry	11.4.88 – 9.1.89 –	2.10.88 – 1.5.89	3.10.88 –	8.1.89	2.5.89 –		11.4.88 –	13.3.89	—	—	14.3.89 –	
Lurgan	11.4.88 –	19.2.89	20.2.89 –		—	—	11.4.88 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –		—	—
Maghersfelt	11.4.88 –	13.11.88	14.11.88 –		—	—	11.4.88 –	12.3.89	13.3.89 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –	

Social Security Office	Loans						Community care grants					
	All priority categories		High and medium priority		High priority		All priority categories		High and medium priority		High priority	
	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To
Newcastle	11.4.88 – 12.2.90 –	9.10.88	9.10.88 – 6.9.89 –	2.4.89 11.2.90	3.4.89 –	5.9.89	11.4.88 –	5.9.89	6.9.89 –	12.1.90	13.1.90 –	
Newry	3.11.88 –	5.3.89	11.4.88 – 6.3.89 – 14.6.89 –	2.11.88 31.5.89	1.6.89 –	13.6.89	11.4.88 –	31.5.89	1.6.89 –	31.1.90	1.2.90 –	
Newtownabbey	—	—	11.4.88 –	27.9.89	28.9.89 –		19.6.89 –		11.4.88 –	18.6.89	—	—
Newtownards	11.4.88 –	12.2.89	14.8.89 –		13.2.89 –	13.8.89	11.4.88 – 8.1.90 –	12.2.89	13.2.89 –	9.1.90	—	—
Omagh	11.4.88 –	22.10.89	23.10.89 –		—	—	11.4.88 –		—	—	—	—
Portadown	11.4.88 –	25.10.88	26.10.88 –	19.6.89	20.6.89 –		—	—	11.4.88 –	9.5.89	10.5.89 –	
Shaftesbury Square	11.4.88 –	5.7.88	6.7.88 –		—	—	11.4.88 –	2.4.89	3.4.89 –	17.11.89	18.11.89 –	
Shankill	11.4.88 – 13.10.89 – 24.11.89 –	11.8.88 1.11.89 28.1.90	24.3.89 – 2.11.89 – 29.1.90 –	13.4.89 23.11.89	12.8.88 – 14.4.89 –	23.3.89 12.10.89	11.4.88 – 13.10.89 –	2.4.89 23.11.89	3.4.89 – 1.8.89 – 24.11.89 –	13.4.89 12.10.89 22.2.90	14.4.89 – 23.2.90 –	31.7.89
Strabane	—	—	11.4.88 – 8.5.89 – 1.12.89 –	9.4.89 22.10.89	10.4.89 – 23.10.89 –	7.5.89 30.11.89	—	—	11.4.88 –	9.4.89	10.4.89 –	

Equal Opportunities

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he has taken, and what action he intends taking, to implement the recommendations within his area of responsibility of the European Commission's childcare network report "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom."

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The report was prepared by the European Community but no proposals have yet been developed. The Government believe that policy on child care is a matter for member states. The United Kingdom policy is that it is for families themselves to determine how their children are to be brought up and how parents who wish to do so can best combine paid work and family responsibilities. The Government through the Department of Health and Social Services and the ministerial group on women's issues have encouraged the development of a range of high quality child care options for both parents and employers in Northern Ireland.

Social Security

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns *342-43*, and the letter of 12 February, concerning the real terms increase in social security expenditure, what information on the percentage of the real terms increase attributable to an increase in the number of beneficiaries is available to him without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The estimated average numbers of claimants receiving the main social security benefits during the years in question rose or are expected to rise as follows:

	per cent.
1978-79	0·9
1979-80	−1·7
1980-81	4·8
1981-82	4·3
1982-83	2·1
1983-84	7·6
1984-85	2·6
1985-86	−0·2
1986-87	1·7
1987-88	1·8
1988-89	−3·4
1989-90	1·9
1990-91	1·8
1991-92	1·5
1992-93	1·5

Cancer

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish statistical information, in table form, of confirmed incidences of cancer/leukaemia in each constituency in Northern Ireland by age group *(a)* up to five years, *(b)* five to 10 years, *(c)* 10 to 15 years, *(d)* 15 to 20 years and *(e)* over 20 years, respectively.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is given in the table:

Notification of leukaemia for Northern Ireland 1988

0-4	5-14	15-24	Over 24
8	6	10	90

Notes:
1. 1988 is the latest year for which information is available.
2. The information given includes all types of leukaemia.

Source: Northern Ireland cancer registration scheme

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken to identify the cause of cancer/leukaemia in children in Northern Ireland and to protect children where possible from risk of exposure to cancer/leukaemia stimulating factors.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* An investigation by an independent committee into patterns of disease with a possible association with radiation was published in 1989. It found no evidence of higher incidence or increased mortality from leukaemia in coastal compared with inland areas.

Northern Ireland is now involved with other parts of the United Kingdom in epidemiological research on leukaemia. Environmental assessment of ionising radiation is carried out to ensure that the community is not exposed to excess levels.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the incidence of cancer/leukaemia confirmed in children in *(a)* East Antrim, *(b)* Northern Ireland and *(c)* United Kingdom, respectively.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is given in the table:

Notification of leukaemia for Children (0-14 years) in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom 1984

	Numbers
Northern Ireland	16
United Kingdom	414

Notes:

1. 1984 is the latest year for which it is possible to produce a United Kingdom figure.
2. The information given includes all types of leukaemia.

Sources: Northern Ireland cancer registration scheme, Scottish Home and Health Department, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Waiting Lists

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the current length of waiting lists at each acute hospital in Northern Ireland; and what were the comparable figures in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The tables show for each acute hospital in Northern Ireland the total number of inpatients on waiting lists at 30 September and by time spent on list for 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Information on outpatient waiting lists has not been collected centrally since the introduction of Korner returns on 1 April 1988. Information relating to outpatient lists for earlier years could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Eastern health and social services board
Total in-patient waiting list by hospital and time waiting
September 1984—September 1989

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Ards						
0-2 months	258	253	244	195	205	150
3-5 months	68	73	103	58	58	70
6-12 months	47	20	89	8	31	47
12-23 months	16	10	92	15	6	8
+24 months	—	—	48	11	8	2
Total	389	356	576	287	308	277
Bangor						
0-2 months	385	412	326	226	124	153
3-5 months	—	—	—	—	55	67
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	30	21
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	17	14
+24 months	—	—	—	—	10	11
Total	385	412	326	226	236	266
Belfast City						
0-2 months	732	940	1,445	1,156	969	1,045
3-5 months	275	311	799	601	790	623
6-12 months	233	233	722	658	744	672
12-23 months	201	125	245	496	506	593
+24 months	267	218	245	401	588	785
Total	1,708	1,827	3,456	3,312	3,597	3,718
Belvoir Pk-NIRC						
0-2 months	85	77	97	82	—	64
3-5 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	85	77	97	82	0	64
Claremont St						
0-2 months	2	—	—	C	—	—
3-5 months	—	—	—	L	—	—
6-12 months	—	—	—	O	—	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	S	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	E	—	—
Total	2	—	—	D	—	—
Crawsfordburn						
0-2 months	21	18	8	12	—	3
3-5 months	9	11	6	7	6	6
6-12 months	29	19	22	4	7	3

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
12-23 months	16	8	25	3	—	2
+24 months	11	7	19	6	—	—
Total	86	63	80	32	13	14
Downe						
0-2 months	156	130	3	28	56	37
3-5 months	49	62	—	—	3	2
6-12 months	45	63	—	—	—	—
12-23 months	35	42	—	—	—	—
+24 months	11	23	—	—	—	—
Total	296	320	3	38	59	39
Lagan Valley						
0-2 months	166	178	97	130	72	154
3-5 months	16	59	55	70	17	47
6-12 months	2	17	8	7	7	10
12-23 months	8	—	2	1	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	192	254	162	208	96	211
Mater						
0-2 months	459	180	88	54	30	44
3-5 months	—	—	—	—	16	12
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	1	3
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	459	180	88	54	47	59
Musgrave Park						
0-2 months	816	834	657	792	581	399
3-5 months	595	555	520	532	943	462
6-12 months	866	695	622	758	1,102	747
12-23 months	964	730	750	663	823	830
+24 months	1,985	1,135	794	745	545	490
Total	5,226	3,949	3,343	3,490	3,994	2,928
R.B.H.S.C.						
0-2 months	137	237	295	217	221	177
3-5 months	132	135	213	262	156	82
6-12 months	134	126	159	198	295	90
12-23 months	87	74	139	164	102	86
+24 months	60	82	23	71	92	149
Total	550	654	829	912	866	584
R.V.H.						
0-2 months	1,294	1,224	1,875	1,495	2,000	2,060
3-5 months	749	736	1,128	944	1,156	1,087
6-12 months	925	915	1,023	1,236	1,360	1,310
12-23 months	997	920	1,126	1,279	1,474	1,351
+24 months	1,161	1,377	1,666	1,713	1,808	2,015
Total	5,126	5,172	6,837	6,667	7,798	7,823
Samaritan						
0-2 months	136	119	—	'	—	—
3-5 months	9	9	—	'	—	—
6-12 months	8	5	—	'	—	—
12-23 months	5	8	—	'	—	—
+24 months	—	1	—	'	—	—
Total	158	142	—	'	—	—
Templemore Avenue						
0-2 months	1	1	—	'	—	—
3-5 months	—	—	—	'	—	—
6-12 months	—	—	—	'	—	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	'	—	—
+24 months	1	—	—	'	—	—
Total	2	1	—	'	—	—
Ulster						
0-2 months	614	688	883	714	639	511
3-5 months	268	295	380	395	260	374
6-12 months	261	298	458	461	499	359
12-23 months	460	402	435	590	534	457
+24 months	421	582	740	769	865	806
Total	2,024	2,265	2,896	2,929	2,797	2,507
Shaftesbury Square						
0-2 months	—	—	—	—	4	—

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
3-5 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	0	0	0	0	4	0

[1] Closed.

Northern health and social services board
Total in-patient waiting list by hospital and time waiting
September 1984-September 1989

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Braid valley						
0-2 months	31	18	23	13	9	3
3-5 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	31	18	23	13	9	3
Coleraine						
0-2 months	52	76	64	55	62	93
3-5 months	86	54	29	45	22	73
6-12 months	131	87	48	45	28	9
12-23 months	85	81	58	60	39	1
+24 months	14	25	5	10	6	—
Total	368	323	204	215	157	176
Dalriada						
0-2 months	2	5	2	3	9	—
3-5 months	7	2	11	3	5	—
6-12 months	9	4	13	2	2	—
12-23 months	9	9	7	15	2	—
+24 months	1	1	1	—	2	—
Total	28	21	34	23	20	0
Greenisland						
0-2 months	25	11	21	19	12	6
3-5 months	9	4	13	5	6	1
6-12 months	14	1	7	6	7	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	1	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	48	16	41	31	25	7
Massereene						
0-2 months	40	58	16	62	9	17
3-5 months	2	—	—	11	—	29
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	42	58	16	73	9	46
Mid-Ulster						
0-2 months	15	10	18	15	54	71
3-5 months	12	18	6	4	5	25
6-12 months	21	10	9	18	—	4
12-23 months	35	28	15	10	—	—
+24 months	71	14	25	45	—	—
Total	154	80	73	92	59	100
Moyle						
0-2 months	172	191	144	137	149	176
3-5 months	13	6	46	25	37	83
6-12 months	—	9	—	—	16	54
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	31
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	185	206	190	162	202	344
Route						
0-2 months	132	128	180	154	132	110
3-5 months	24	28	17	48	2	18
6-12 months	25	36	17	17	14	—
12-23 months	35	16	27	17	7	—
+24 months	1	1	2	2	—	—
Total	217	209	243	238	155	128

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Waveney						
0-2 months	451	303	431	425	453	381
3-5 months	110	139	195	120	146	183
6-12 months	57	157	250	208	175	236
12-23 months	62	55	117	138	212	181
+24 months	3	19	25	82	106	115
Total	683	673	1,018	973	1,092	1,096
Whiteabbey						
0-2 months	150	151	192	148	215	244
3-5 months	16	17	12	20	28	23
6-12 months	14	—	—	—	—	4
12-23 months	4	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	184	168	204	168	243	271

Southern health and social services board
Total in-patient waiting list by hospital and time waiting
September 1984—September 1989

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Banbridge						
0-2 months	52	60	52	78	97	49
3-5 months	—	—	—	—	56	10
6-12 months	—	—	—	—	35	4
12-23 months	—	—	—	—	—	2
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	52	60	52	78	188	65
Craigavon area						
0-2 months	377	464	522	476	479	462
3-5 months	91	110	126	78	86	138
6-12 months	94	114	106	67	68	81
12-23 months	86	67	49	19	35	32
+24 months	52	22	3	—	—	10
Total	700	777	806	640	668	723
Daisy Hill						
0-2 months	123	105	182	137	127	262
3-5 months	1	—	3	—	—	—
6-12 months	5	—	—	—	—	—
12-23 months	7	—	—	—	—	—
+24 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	136	105	185	137	127	262
Lurgan						
0-2 months	44	28	38	48	27	6
3-5 months	15	13	5	16	14	1
6-12 months	23	16	10	12	6	—
12-23 months	10	12	4	7	1	—
+24 months	17	19	10	12	4	—
Total	109	88	67	95	52	7
South Tyrone						
0-2 months	208	194	185	470	335	220
3-5 months	111	95	32	154	261	123
6-12 months	122	81	75	78	345	91
12-23 months	119	107	23	8	107	66
+24 months	51	35	—	—	1	32
Total	611	512	315	710	1,049	532

Western health and social services board
Total in-patient waiting list by hospital and time waiting
September 1984—September 1989

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Altnagelvin						
0-2 months	501	538	651	619	859	854
3-5 months	198	291	288	320	432	446
6-12 months	175	241	350	384	538	439
12-23 months	97	66	163	358	401	505
+24 months	—	—	8	375	506	670
Total	971	1,136	1,460	2,056	2,736	2,914
Erne						
0-2 months	109	106	160	97	109	126

Hospital	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
3-5 months	43	38	30	41	24	2
6-12 months	87	100	84	47	39	—
12-23 months	37	95	63	37	36	—
+24 months	4	29	33	10	—	—
Total	280	368	330	232	208	128
Roe Valley						
0-2 months	96	93	37	29	27	—
3-5 months	85	67	10	29	10	—
6-12 months	127	76	93	17	19	—
12-23 months	140	290	172	28	30	—
+24 months	—	—	240	83	91	—
Total	448	526	552	186	177	0
St. Columb's						
0-2 months	—	195	135	194	C	C
3-5 months	—	11	62	100	L	L
6-12 months	—	—	73	95	O	O
12-23 months	—	—	—	9	S	S
+24 months	—	—	—	—	E	E
Total	0	206	270	398	D	D
Tyrone County						
0-2 months	414	370	387	522	318	374
3-5 months	162	172	165	148	88	139
6-12 months	266	242	168	123	75	82
12-23 months	240	302	258	73	7	—
+24 months	115	115	109	8	3	—
Total	1,197	1,201	1,087	874	491	595

European Community Regional Fund

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the sums given to Northern Ireland by the European Economic Community regional fund in each calendar or financial year since the United Kingdom became a recipient of fund moneys; and what percentage of total Government expenditure this represented in Northern Ireland in each calendar or financial year.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The European regional development fund was established after the United Kingdom's accession to the Community and the first grants were received in 1975-76. Figures for Northern Ireland's receipts, and the percentage they represented of public expenditure in the Northern Ireland block are as follows:

European regional development fund receipts and proportion of Northern Ireland block

Financial year	Total £ million	per cent.
1975-76	2·9	0·2
1976-77	7·2	0·4
1977-78	6·4	0·4
1978-79	4·0	0·2
1979-80	16·0	0·6
1980-81	21·0	0·7
1981-82	16·4	0·5
1982-83	18·0	0·5
1983-84	13·5	0·4
1984-85	16·9	0·4
1985-86	18·4	0·4
1986-87	23·2	0·5
1987-88	45·9	1·0
1988-89	46·7	0·9
Total	[1]256·5	0·6

[1] The figures show total European regional development fund receipts brought to account in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that awards totalling £10·5 million were decommitted by the European Commission on failed industrial projects.

Western Health and Social Services Board

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the reason for the Western health and social services board recently requesting each employee to specify which primary school they had attended; what was the percentage response to the first request; and how many requests were necessary before all employees had answered the question to the satisfaction of management.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 February 1990]:* The Western health and social services board requested its employees to specify the primary schools that they attended for the purpose of monitoring the religious composition of its work force.

Forty-five per cent. of staff (excluding home helps) responded to the first request; a further 35 per cent. responded to two subsequent requests and a search of personnel files was carried out on the remaining 20 per cent. Fifty two per cent. of home helps responded to the first request and a search of personnel files was carried out on the remaining 48 per cent.

Security Forces (Shooting)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what circumstances the security forces in Northern Ireland are entitled to shoot on sight.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 12 February 1990]:* The law provides, under section 3(1) of the Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967, that any person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders. Members of the police and Army are subject to the law in the same way as other citizens. It is ultimately a matter for the courts to decide in individual cases that come before them what is "reasonable" in the particular circumstances of that case.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Allowances

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about procedures for medically examining claimants for mobility allowance, attendance allowance and severe disablement allowance; whether claimants are required to accept examination by a doctor nominated by his Department; and what consideration has been given to allowing the claimant to nominate a doctor or to use his own doctor for such purposes.

Mr. Scott: Mobility allowance and attendance allowance claimants may refuse examination by a doctor nominated by the Department if they so wish. Medical evidence is then obtained, with the claimant's permission, from the general practitioner or from a hospital, where relevant. However, reports from the doctors trained by the Department tend to be more thorough and are more likely to provide the type of information required to decide the claim. No claim can be decided in the absence of medical evidence. In SDA cases there are some instances in which no medical examination is required if there is already sufficient medical evidence for a favourable decision to be made. Usually the claimant is required to attend examination by an adjudicating medical authority consisting of one or two doctors. This is a statutory authority and only doctors who have been formally appointed by the Secretary of State may serve on it. To maintain impartiality a doctor may not serve as an adjudicating medical authority or a member of such an authority considering any case if he has regularly attended the claimant or has provided a report. For these reasons, the claimant may not nominate a doctor or use his own doctor for the purpose, even if the doctor is on the panel of a medical boarding centre.

The information provided applies to Great Britain, although a similar scheme operates in Northern Ireland. Requests for information concerning the Northern Ireland scheme should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is issued by his Department as to notice given to claimants that they are to be examined by a doctor in connection with claims for social security benefits; and what procedures are adopted for appointing the examining doctor in each area.

Mr. Scott: Claimants for attendance allowance and mobility allowance are contacted by the doctor who will be conducting the examination in order to arrange a time. Guidance both verbally and in guidance notes is provided that the doctor should contact the claimant, preferably in writing, giving the claimant seven days' notice where possible of the proposed date and time. In severe disablement allowance cases lay staff provide 10 days' notice of examination.

Examining medical practitioners are appointed by the senior medical officer of the region. They are usually recruited from among general practitioners within the locality who already have expertise in conducting medical examinations. They are given guidance by the senior medical officer or a regional office medical officer on the backgrounds of, and conditions for the awards for attendance allowance and mobility allowance. The performance of the examining medical practitioners is closely monitored by the senior medical officer to identify any further need for guidance for training. The form such monitoring takes is a matter for the senior medical officer.

The information provided applies to Great Britain, although a similar scheme operates in Northern Ireland. Requests for information concerning the Northern Ireland scheme should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what tests and criteria are used by physicians when assessing entitlement to *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance and *(c)* severe disablement allowance; and what consideration is given to factors affecting people with AIDS who may not be experiencing obvious symptoms.

Mr. Scott: In attendance allowance the doctors who examine claimants and conduct clinical tests are not the same as the doctors who assess entitlement. The tests carried out by examining doctors are those that they consider necessary in order to complete the examining forms. This also applies in severe disablement allowance although claimants for this benefit are both examined and assessed by an adjudicating medical authority consisting of one or two doctors. The criteria used by doctors assessing entitlement are set out in the appropriate handbooks. These are the handbooks for delegated medical practitioners and the severe disablement allowance handbook for adjudicating medical authorities. The handbooks are available in the Library.

For mobility allowance, the clinical tests are conducted by doctors but the assessment of entitlement is carried out by adjudication officers who may seek the advice of full-time medical officers when necessary.

People with AIDS are treated as all other members of the community in deciding their entitlement to these benefits. The only special treatment within the social security system for people with AIDS is the provision for any payments made to haemophiliacs who are infected with AIDS virus or to their families out of the Macfarlane Trust or the Macfarlane (Special Payments) Trust to be completely disregarded for the purposes of the income-related benefits.

The information provided applies to Great Britain, although a similar scheme operates in Northern Ireland. Requests for information concerning the Northern Ireland scheme should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Residential Homes

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the total amount paid in *(a)* supplementary benefit in 1980 and *(b)* income support in 1989 to the residents of private residential care homes, by local authority area and by region;

(2) what was the total amount paid in *(a)* supplementary benefit in 1980 and *(b)* income support in 1989 to the residents of private nursing homes, by district health authority area and by region.

Mr. Scott: Information in the form requested is not available.

Social Fund

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the position of a claimant paying off a social fund loan at the rate of 5 per cent., 10 per cent., or 15 per cent. of income support in respect of an unpaid community charge.

Mr. Scott: Social fund loans are not available for community charge debts which may be recovered from income support at a rate of £1·85 per week for a single person and £2·90 for a couple from April 1990. This action may be taken only after a court order has been obtained by a local authority.

Where repayments of social fund loans are being made from income support when this action is taken, officials are able to reconsider the rate of repayment of the social fund loan.

WALES

Earnings

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish tables showing the proportion of (i) manual, (ii) non-manual and (iii) all full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £160, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £170, *(d)* £120 and *(e)* £110 for (1) men, (2) women and (3) all full-time employees, excluding overtime pay, in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Due to the extensive amount of information requested, I shall write to the hon. Lady.

School Leavers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to secure a reduction in the number of pupils in Wales who leave school without any qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The aim of the GCSE examination and of our education reforms, including the national curriculum, is to raise education standards and thereby encourage 16-year-olds to take advantage of the various opportunities available for further study.

War Veterans

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the conditions and facilities for war veterans at Rookwood hospital, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The conditions and facilities provided for war veterans at Rookwood hospital are matters for South Glamorgan health authority which has the direct management responsibility for services at the hospital. If the hon. and learned Gentleman has a particular issue with which he is concerned he may like to contact the health authority's general manager or write to me.

Expenditure

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to publish a separate commentary on planned expenditure within his responsibility between 1990-91 and 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am pleased to announce that the 1990 Welsh Office commentary is being published today. The commentary, which has been produced bilingually, complements and expands upon the information published in the Wales chapter of the 1990 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1016) at the end of January. It is a valuable source document for anyone with an interest in the Government's expenditure plans for Wales.

I have arranged for copies of the commentary to be made available through the Vote Office.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Leather Tariffs

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that after March 1991 Japanese tariffs on leather are reduced to not more than 10 per cent. and their quota system abolished.

Mr. Redwood: The European Community is pressing Japan, directly and through the GATT Uruguay round negotiations, to improve access for our exporters of leather goods when the present EC-Japan agreement expires in 1991. We fully support the Community and have drawn the particular concerns of the British industry to the attention of the European Commission.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the cost of supporting the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend will find detailed information about the performance of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's credit insurance activities, which are operated on a trading basis, in the Export Credits Guarantee Department's annual report and trading accounts for 1988-89. Information about the costs of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's public expenditure programmes is contained in chapter 4 of the Government's expenditure plans 1990-91 to 1992-93 (Cm. 1004).

Supply Estimates provision for the net cash costs of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's operations in 1989-90 is as follows:

Class V, vote 5 ECGD Administration £42·7 million
Class V, vote 6 ECGD Trading Operations £473·8 million
Class V, vote 7 ECGD Export Finance Assistance £349·9 million

The figures for votes 6 and 7 reflect revised provision sought in the spring supplementary estimates presented to the House on 13 February.

Euroflame Holdings plc

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors underlay his decisions on making available his Department's report on Euroflame *(a)* to Parliament and *(b)* to certain accountancy firms and professional accountancy organisations.

Mr. Redwood: I have nothing to add to my letters of 22 September, 1 November and 30 January 1990 to the hon. Member.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the accountancy firm of Mr. D. Anton has been criticised by any Department of Trade and Industry inspector or the joint disciplinary scheme.

Mr. Redwood: Not so far as I am aware.

Business Development

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the take-up in Lancashire of his various programmes of assistance to encourage business development.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information provided details of the take-up in Lancashire of current DTI programmes of assistance.

All figures given are from the date in brackets to the end of January 1990:

Enterprise Initiative (January 1988): 1,031 business reviews have been carried out. Of these, 857 have been referred for consultancy advice; 333 of these projects have been completed.

Regional selective assistance (November 1984): in the Blackburn Accrington and Rossendale travel-to-work area and the West Lancashire part of the Liverpool travel-to-work area, 248 offers have been made totalling £27,057,463.

Small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART) (October 1988): two offers have been made totalling £74,350.

Zimbabwe (Tobacco Industry)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the contribution made to the gross national product of Zimbabwe by that country's tobacco industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: In 1986 the value of tobacco sold to/through the marketing authorities totalled 365 million Zimbabwe dollars and represented 5·2 per cent. of the GNP at factor cost. In 1988 tobacco sales were valued at 486 million Zimbabwe dollars and represented 5·9 per cent. of the GDP at factor cost. (*Source:* March 1989 Quarterly Digest of Statistics—CSO HARARE).

Electrical Appliances

Mr. Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward regulations to require all domestic electrical appliances to be fitted with a plug before sale to the public.

Mr. Ridley: No. The question of the fitment of plugs to domestic appliances before sale is one for appliance manufacturers or retailers to decide in the light of consumer demand.

Batteries

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to manufacturers and retailers about the lead content of batteries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most lead-containing batteries are covered by the scope of a draft EC directive which aims to reduce the amounts of that metal going in spent batteries to landfill or incineration for disposal. Negotiations on the draft directive have recently begun in Brussels. Officials in my Department have been in regular contact with representatives of the lead and battery industries over the past months.

Buy British Campaign

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the Buy British campaign.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no such campaign. A number of private sector organisations draw attention to the advantages of buying United Kingdom goods and services when they are competitive in quality, price and delivery.

Industry Council

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Minister from his Department will attend the EEC Industry Council on 13 March.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 8 March 1990]:* I shall attend the Industry Council on 13 March on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Trade with Japan

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the achievements and objectives of Her Majesty's Government's policy on trade with Japan.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 March 1990]:* The Government have three main trade policy objectives with Japan.

The first is to persuade the Japanese authorities to implement structural reforms to sustain the shift in the balance of their economy from export-led growth to domestic demand-led growth. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, during her visit to Japan last year, emphasised the need for action in this area.

The second is to secure the removal of the remaining barriers to market access. Few such barriers remain. Where they do, the Government campaign vigorously for their removal through the appropriate channels: bilaterally, through the European Community and through the GATT.

The Government's approach has achieved significant results. For example, last April the Japanese Government removed discriminatory taxation on imported whisky, with the result that the value of exports of Scotch whisky to Japan (which is the industry's third largest market) has risen by almost 90 per cent. since liberalisation. Also, EC-Japan discussions have led to the removal of barriers to exports of EC motor vehicles to Japan; last year, unit sales of United Kingdom car exports to Japan grew by 48 per cent.

The Government's third objective is to ensure that the British business community is fully aware of the greatly increased opportunities in Japan, and of the strategic importance of the Japanese market. My Department's Opportunity Japan campaign was launched in 1988 to address this need. A target was set of doubling British exports to Japan in three years. The determined efforts of

British exporters mean that we are well on the way to doing so: last year United Kingdom exports of goods to Japan increased by £525 million to £2·3 billion, an increase of 30·1 per cent. over 1988.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Redwood: On 13 March I expect to attend a meeting with United States and Japanese regulators on financial services issues at which the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board will be present. Apart from this, no meeting is currently scheduled between the chairman and either my right hon. Friend or myself.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Taxation

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister for the Arts what works have been accepted in lieu of taxation in the last two years.

Mr. Luce: The following items have been accepted in lieu of tax since March 1988:

Portrait of Captain Wade by Thomas Gainsborough.
Two marble busts by Roubilliac of Lady Murray of Stanhope and of Lady Grisell Baillie.
Five portraits by Francis Coates, of Pryse Campbell, Sarah Campbell, Elizabeth Adams, John Campbell Hooke and Lt.-Col. Alexander Campbell.
Two portraits by Sir William Beechey, of Rear Admiral Sir George Campbell and of Lady Caroline Cawdor.
Two portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence, of John Frederick, 1st Earl of Cawdor and of Elizabeth Cawdor.
Two paintings by William Hogarth of the Fermor children.
"Floral Study of a Vase of Flowers on a Table" by Jacob Marrel.
Plate (i) of the Book of Ahania by William Blake.
Sculpture, "Construction in Space: Soaring" by Naum Gabo.
"A Tartar Huntsman" by Sir Peter Paul Rubens.
"The Artist's Studio" by Peter Tillemans.
Two portraits by Angelica Kauffman, of Jane, Duchess of Gordon as Diana and of Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon.
Ten letters written to Sir Arthur Bryant by Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein.
"Alleé à Chantilly" by Paul Cezanne.
"Fabula" by El Greco.
A collection of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval coins.
Painting of the Cameo of Tiberius by Sir Peter Paul Rubens.
A portrait of Sir Alexander Carew attributed to Marcus Gheerheardts.
"Après la Pluie, Quai à Pontoise" by Camille Pissaro.
Eight Islamic tiles.
"Farm Cart with Horse in Harness" by John Constable.
"Oasthouses" by Frederick Austin.
Three paintings by Monica Poole, "Old Fence", "Edge of Wood", "Roof".
Two paintings by Keith Grant, "The Blind Man", "The Aurora, triptych".
Two paintings by Sinclair Thompson, "Gairloch", "Joan Eardley asleep in a Wicker Chair".
"The Yellow Runner" by Peter Lanyon.
"The Cornfield" by Joan Eardley.
"The Large Shore" by Michael Ayrton.
"Cathedral Forest" by Ivon Hitchins.
"Saucepans on a Table" by William Scott.
"Venetian Blind" by Anne Redpath.
"Winter Legend" by Alan Reynolds.
"Greek Landscape" by John Craxton.
"Estuary Scene" by Graham Sutherland.
"Cwm Graianog above Nant Ffaincon" by John Piper.
"Houses through Trees" by Peter Coker.
"Landscape" by Norman Adams.
An 18th century harpsichord.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hepatitis B

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners and prison officers have been vaccinated against hepatitis B by prison medical officers in each year since 1984.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners have been diagnosed as infected with the hepatitis B virus while serving a prison sentence or detained in a remand centre;

(2) what information he has as to the number of prisoners who have contacted the hepatitis B virus while serving a prison sentence or detained in a remand centre.

Mr. Mellor: Information about the number of identified cases of hepatitis B infection reported by prison medical officers was given on 2 March in reply to an earlier question by the hon. Member at column *350*. Cases in which the infection was thought to have been acquired while the prisoner was in custody are not separately recorded.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the figures for the rate of infection by hepatitis B for *(a)* prisoners and *(b)* the general population.

Mr. Mellor: The aggregate of identified acute and chronic (carrier) cases reported by prison medical officers in England and Wales for the year ended 31 March 1989 (the last year for which information is available) was 347. Some of the cases identified may have been counted more than once. This figure represents 0·7 per cent. of the average daily prison population and 0·3 per cent. of the prisoners received during the year.

Information relating to the general population is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines issued by the director of prison medical services concerning vaccination policy against hepatitis B for inmates of prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The guidelines were issued on 22 August 1989 in a letter to prison medical officers. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if inmates of long-term custodial institutions are defined as belonging to a high-risk behaviour group; and how many have been vaccinated against hepatitis B since 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The director of prison medical services has defined the groups who are at high risk of hepatitis B infection as parenteral drug misusers and individuals who frequently change sexual partners. Prison medical officers have been advised to consider offering vaccination to any

prisoner identified as belonging to one of these groups who is likely to remain in the prison system long enough to take advantage of the full course of three injections over six months. The offer is not restricted to prisoners in particular types of establishment. The number of vaccinated is not centrally recorded.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures are used in the medical inquiry and examination of prisoners at the reception stages to determine if a prisoner is infected by hepatitis B or is at risk of contracting the disease.

Mr. Mellor: All prisoners on first reception are asked to complete a form which includes questions designed to establish among other things whether they have consulted their doctor recently; are receiving any form of treatment; have ever had a serious illness (hepatitis is given as an example) or been in hospital; or have ever taken drugs. This information is available to the medical officer carrying out the reception medical examination. The procedure followed in the examination is a matter for clinical discretion.

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the figures for the number of assaults on prison officers within Her Majesty's prisons and remand centres, which resulted in injuries sustained by officers or prisoners together with a breakdown of type of injury and their number.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is about prisoners found guilty on adjudication of gross personal violence to a prison officer or of assault or attempted assault on a prison officer. Figures for 1988 were published in table 14 of Statistics of Offences Against Prison Discipline and Punishment, England and Wales 1988 (Cm 929). Data for earlier years appear in chapter 9 of Prison Statistics England and Wales. Copies of both publications are held in the Library.

Details of injuries are not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Concessionary Television Licences

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to correspondence from the hon. Member for Harborough, together with Harborough district council, relating to the intended removal of sheltered residents at Hill court, Bushby, Leicestershire from the concessionary television licence scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have now seen copies of the correspondence and confirm that the Hill court scheme cannot qualify for the concession under the 1988 regulations. The fact that the scheme and adjoining doctor's surgery were built as one structure means the scheme fails to satisfy the common and exclusive boundary criterion.

However, residents who had the concession before the change in the regulations in May 1988 will continue to benefit from it under the preserved rights provision of the 1988 regulations.

Chief Inspector of Prisons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the report of the chief inspector of prisons.

Mr. Mellor: No. I have nothing to add to the commentary on the 1988 report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, placed in the Library on 25 July 1989.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each of the last 10 years, how many animals were used to test cosmetics and toiletries, the types of animals used and how many died during the course of the test.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of experiments or procedures involving each type of animal is published in table 2 (cosmetics and toiletries) of the annual "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals, Great Britain" for the years 1979-86 inclusive (Cmnd. 8069, 8301, 8657, 8986, 9311, 9574, 9839, and Cm. 187) and table 3 of "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain" for the years 1987-88 inclusive (Cm. 515 and 743). Copies of all these publications are in the Library.

Forensic Pathology

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of the responses that he received to the proposals in the report of the working party on forensic pathology; together with the date that each of those responses was received by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responses were received from the following on the dates shown:

	Date
Dr. R. M. Whittington Her Majesty's Coroner	23 August 1989
Dr. G. Garrett Home Office Pathologist (on behalf of North West Home Office Pathologists)	24 August 1989
Mr. C. W. P. Newell Crown Prosecution Service	31 August 1989
Mr. David Owen, QPM Chief Constable, North Wales Police; Chairman, Crime Committee, Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland	11 September 1989
Dr. M. A. Green Secretary, British Association in Forensic Medicine	12 September 1989
Mr. S. R. Barter Her Majesty's Coroner	22 September 1989
Mr. J. E. H. Pendower Dean, Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School	28 September 1989
Mr. A. A. Mullett, QPM Chief Constable, West Mercia Police; Honorary Secretary, Crime Committee, Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland	29 September 1989
Dr. I. E. West Head of Department of Forensic Medicine, United Medical Schools of Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals	5 October 1989

	Date
Mr. D. R. Bowman Environmental Services Department, Birmingham City Council	13 October 1989
Dr. M. Rufus Crompton Department of Forensic Medicine, St. George's Hospital Medical School	16 October 1989
Dr. P. R. Acland Home Office Pathologist	26 October 1989
Dr. J. D. K. Burton Her Majesty's Coroner; Honorary Secretary, Coroners Society of England and Wales	27 October 1989
Mr. A. Bosi British Medical Association	27 October 1989
Dr. A. R. Williams Home Office Pathologist	30 October 1989
Professor Bernard Wood Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Biology, The University of Liverpool	31 October 1989
Dr. W. R. Timperley Honorary Secretary, Association of Clinical Pathologists	2 November 1989
Mr. K. Lockyer Secretary, The Royal College of Pathologists	3 November 1989
Dr. J. Burston Immediate past President, Association of Clinical Pathologists	6 November 1989
Miss S. Bonfield Association of Metropolitan Authorities	6 November 1989
Mr. A. H. Pitts City Secretary, City of Coventry	22 November 1989
Mr. C. Grenyer Association of County Councils	14 December 1989

Homosexual Acts

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in 1988 how many men aged between 16 and 21 years were convicted for consenting homosexual acts with other males in England and Wales; and, in the cases of those convicted and receiving custodial sentences, what were the durations of those sentences in each individual case.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* Information is not available centrally on the number of males of 16 or over but under 21 who are convicted for the offences of buggery and attempted buggery with another male with his consent. In England and Wales in 1988 68 males of 16 or over but under 21 were convicted for an act of gross indecency with another male, of whom none received a custodial sentence.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Doran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has no plans to do so.

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further proposals he has to relocate Civil Service staff outside London.

Mr. Ryder: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 17 January 1990, at columns *289-90*.

Tax Harmonisation

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet other EC Finance Ministers to discuss indirect tax harmonisation.

Mr. Ryder: The question of indirect tax in the single market has been tabled for discussion at the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers on 12 March.

European Monetary System

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on the future of the European monetary system of the absorption of the East German currency into the West German mark.

Mr. Ryder: Decisions on German monetary union have yet to be taken. The United Kingdom Government are watching developments with interest.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in fulfilling the conditions laid down by Her Majesty's Government for the United Kingdom's membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave him on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *276*.

Motor Vehicles (Customs Seizure)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was realised, in the latest available year, from the sale by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of motor vehicles seized on suspicion of carrying drugs.

Mr. Ryder: In the year to 31 December 1989, the net proceeds of selling motor vehicles seized by Customs in connection with drugs smuggling were £39,850.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what net investment in manufacturing industry has been undertaken *(a)* in total, *(b)* by foreign companies, *(c)* by indigenous companies, for each of the years since 1979 for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member of Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 8 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *749*.

Inflation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he has made to his forecast on inflation for 1990 since the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Ryder: A revised forecast for inflation will be published with the forthcoming Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Taxation

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what income tax a husband and a wife would each have to pay if each earned £10,000 gross per annum *(a)* before April and *(b)* after April; and what tax a single man and a single woman would each have to pay if each earned £10,000 gross per annum.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* Information is given in the table.

Income tax liabilities of types of taxpayers in 1989-90 and 1990-91

Type of taxpayers	[2] *Before April 1990 £ pa*	[1] [3] *After April 1990 £ pa*
(a) Husband on earnings of £10,000 pa[4]	1,406·25	1,318·75
and Wife on earnings of £10,000 pa[4]	1,803·75	1,748·75
(b) Single Man on earnings of £10,000 pa[5]	1,803·75	1,748·75
(c) Single Woman on earnings of £10,000 pa[5]	1,803·75	1,748·75

[1] Calculations based on standard assumption that 1989-90 personal allowances and the basic rate limit have been indexed by 7·7 per cent. for 1990-91.

[2] 1989-90 tax regime.

[3] Assumes independent taxation plus indexation of allowances.

[4] Assumes that the husband and wife receive no other forms of income *and* that they do not receive any tax allowances or reliefs other than (i) the married man's allowance (for the husband) and the wife's earned income allowance (for the wife) in 1989-90, and (ii) the personal allowance *plus* married couple's allowance (for the husband) and the personal allowance (for the wife) in 1990-91.

[5] Assumes that no other forms of income are received *and* no tax allowances or reliefs are received other than (i) the single person's allowance in 1989-90, and (ii) the personal allowance in 1990-91.

VAT

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of reducing the value added tax on fitting catalytic converters to *(a)* zero, *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* 10 per cent. on the assumption that the number of catalytic converters fitted (i) stayed at the current rate, (ii) increased by 3 per cent., (iii) increased by 5 per cent. and (iv) increased by 10 per cent.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 8 March 1990]:* Information on which to base an estimate is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of reducing the value added tax rate levied on non-recyclable, non-biodegradable packaging to *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* zero on the assumption that packaging was not regarded as an integral part of the goods it contains and therefore could be taxed at a different rate.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 8 March 1990]:* Information on which to base an estimate is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised if the value added tax rate levied on non-recyclable, non-biodegradable packaging was increased to *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 25 per cent. and *(c)* 30 per cent. on the assumption that packaging was not regarded as an integral part of the goods it contains and therefore could be taxed at a different rate.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 8 March 1990]:* Information on which to base an estimate is not available.

DEFENCE

Computer Hacking

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many NATO military databases were infiltrated by computer hacking by the three West Germans convicted on 15 February in West Germany of selling the information they obtained to a foreign power; and if he will list each such database located in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is responsible only for the security of the United Kingdom military database. I am not aware of any evidence that the three West Germans convicted by a West German court on 15 February 1990 breached the security of a United Kingdom database.

ICI War Materials Factory

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who currently holds the employment records of those employed by the Ministry of Supply, between 1942 and 1946, at the ICI war materials factory sited at Springfields, Solwick near Preston.

Mr. Neubert: The files of certain former employees of the Ministry of Supply are held in confidence, among other personal records, in Ministry of Defence archives. They are stored by date of birth and not by work areas. Without further details, I cannot confirm whether they include any personnel from the ICI site at Springfields.

Land Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the considerations behind the requirement on single people to contribute towards a widow's pension under the United Kingdom land forces pension scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Superannuation benefits for eligible personnel of Her Majesty's armed forces are provided through the armed forces pension scheme. That scheme, which includes pension provision for the widows or widowers of deceased members, is non-contributory. The cost of benefits is met from funds allocated to the appropriate defence vote. However, the armed forces pay review body, in determining recommended rates of pay for the armed forces, makes an adjustment which takes into account differences in pension arrangements between those for the armed forces and those of comparator organisations.

Falkland Islands (Forces Deployment)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he proposes to make changes in the composition of the land and sea and air forces presently

deployed for the protection of the Falkland Islands in the light of the resumption of diplomatic relations with Argentina.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I welcome the resumption of diplomatic relations with Argentina and the reciprocal consultation system that has been agreed for military movements in the south Atlantic. This agreement does not affect force levels, but will enable us to lift the Falkland Islands protection zone from the end of this month. Force levels are, however, kept under review to ensure that we continue to provide appropriate forces to maintain our commitment to the defence of the Falkland Islands.

HEALTH

Children (Illegal Employment)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is collected on numbers of illegally employed children in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of children illegally employed in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information relating to prosecutions and convictions for the illegal employment of children in different areas of employment is shown in the tables.

(a) Non-Industrial undertakings

Figures notified to the Home Office for prosecutions and convictions in England and Wales under sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933:

Year	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
1979	23	18
1980	26	25
1981	24	22
1982	17	16
1983	12	12
1984	12	9
1985	11	9
1986	2	2
1987	8	8
1988	28	22

Comparable figures are not available for Scotland.

(b) Industrial undertakings

Prosecutions by the HM factory and agricultural inspectorates under Section 1 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 and concerning the illegal employment of children:

Year (a)	*Informations Laid*	*Convictions*
1981	4	4
1982	4	4
1983	3	3
1984	6	6
1985	8	6
1986-Q1	4	4
1986-87	11	9
1987-88	2	2
1988-89p	7	7

1981-1985—Calendar years
1986-Q1—1 January to 31 March
1986-87 onwards—Years commencing 1 April
p—provisional

(c) Agricultural undertakings

Information laid by HM agricultural inspectorate against persons at work who put at risk children under the age of 16 by the contravention of agricultural legislation:

Year (a)	*Informations Laid*	*Convictions*
1981	40	37
1982	31	24
1983	18	16
1984	16	15
1985	30	27
1986	27	22
1987	21	15
1988-Q1	3	3
1988-89p	18	17

1981-1987—Calendar years
1988-Q1—1 January to 31 March
1988-89p—Year commencing 1 April
p—provisional
Figures for industrial and agricultural undertakings apply to Great Britain.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what costs are to be levied on local health authorities towards the cost of Army and police services during the ambulance dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The additional cost of military and police assistance incurred by health authorities during the ambulance dispute are still being assessed. The cost of all non-military assistance is being met by the various health authorities which have contracted for those services and which have been responsible for negotiating locally the terms of such contracts. The cost of military assistance, which stem partly from the training and general preparation needed to achieve a state of readiness across the country, is being apportioned among regional health authorities in line with their share of main revenue allocations.

Food Poisoning

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning in 1989 were associated with the consumption of eggs; and in how many of those the vehicle of infection was suspected or known to have been home-made mayonnaise.

Mr. Freeman: Most cases of food poisoning are sporadic and cannot be linked to a particular food vehicle with any confidence. In 1989, salmonella was the causative organism of 42 outbreaks (involving 549 people) in which eggs, or egg-containing foods, were the suspected vehicle of infection. A further five outbreaks were due to Bacillus cereus. In four of these egg was a component of egg fried rice, and since B. cereus is particularly associated with rice it is likely that rice was the source. In the fifth an omelette was reported as the vehicle; one of the constituents other than the egg may have been the source. In three of the 42 egg-associated outbreaks (involving 96 people) due to salmonella, the food suspected was mayonnaise made from fresh shell eggs.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outbreaks of food poisoning have been associated with eggs in each of the last five years which involved mayonnaise, where human sources of contamination have been implicated.

Mr. Freeman: In no outbreak reported to (or investigated by) the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre in the last five years (1985-89 inclusive) in which mayonnaise was suspected has a human source of contamination been implicated.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outbreaks of food poisoning have been associated with eggs in each of the last five years where the causative organism was not salmonella.

Mr. Freeman: Eggs or egg-containing foods were the suspected vehicle of infection in 10 outbreaks due to organisms other than salmonella in the last five years (1985-89 inclusive). Five of these outbreaks occurred in 1989 and, as described in my previous answer today, in four of these egg fried rice was suspected, with rice the probable source of the infection. In the fifth, an omelette was the vehicle.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any evidence of any cases of food poisoning being caused by the consumption of pasteurised liquid egg within the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: In no outbreak reported to the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre in the last five years (1985-89 inclusive) has pasteurised liquid egg been suspected as the vehicle of infection.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take in respect of the Exeter public health laboratory report to the effect that eggs when fresh are unlikely to constitute a significant potential health hazard.

Mr. Freeman: Research carried out by the Exeter public health laboratory showed that eggs laid by two infected flocks were intermittently infected with less than 10 organisms of S. enteritidis phage type 4 per egg at point of lay. However, a substantial number of outbreaks of human salmonellosis where the source of infection was identified have been caused by eggs. In the examination of shell eggs, the numbers of salmonellas are not routinely estimated. This is because the presence of even small numbers is regarded as a potential health hazard. During limited special investigations, two shell eggs containing many hundreds of salmonellas have been found. Research continues to investigate the factors which govern the multiplication of salmonella in shell eggs.

Meanwhile, the chief medical officer continues to advise the public not to eat raw eggs or uncooked foods made with them, and for vulnerable people to consume only eggs which have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the reasons why the number of laboratory-confirmed cases of food poisoning reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre for the first six weeks of the year are at a record level.

Mr. Freeman: Fluctuations in single weekly reports of salmonella isolates to the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre are not a guide to long-term trends. Any weekly reporting system will inevitably be subject to short-term anomalies. This occurred during the postal strike of 1988, and was also the case for weeks 2 and 3 of this year when delayed reporting and a backlog of data entry gave rise to an artificial increase. The apparent increase in reports for this year over last is likely to decline as the anomalous weeks 2 and 3 contribute a smaller proportion of the total.

It is to permit analysis of trends that the public health laboratory service and the state veterinary service has introduced recently the quarterly publication "Update on Salmonella Infection". The figures published in this for 1986-89 indicate a recent levelling-off in the incidence of Salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 infections, which account for the greatest number of all human salmonella infections. The volume of laboratory work undertaken by the PHLS division of enteric pathogens for the beginning of this year confirms this trend.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the risk to health from meat birds which have been infected with salmonella enteritidis PT4 being sold to domestic consumers where they might be undercooked, recontaminated after cooking or, in their raw state, provide a source of contamination which might, directly or indirectly, contaminate other foods.

Mr. Freeman: It is well established through microbiological surveys that poultry are frequently contaminated with salmonella. Consumers are well aware of the need for good hygienic handling of poultry meat in the kitchen and of the need for thorough cooking. The current wide circulation of the Government's "Food Safety" leaflet has reinforced these needs.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has issued any specific guidance to caterers for the production of home-made mayonnaise, so as to prevent the multiplication of salmonella or other organisms introduced into the mix by whatever means; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: On 26 August 1988 caterers were first advised to use pasteurised egg for uncooked egg dishes since such commercially produced products, manufactured with pasteurised egg, had not been implicated as a source of infection. This was reiterated on 21 November and again by the Chief Medical Officer on 5 December 1988. This advice endorsed the egg industry's own code of practice on the hygienic handling and use of eggs.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has assessed the risk to health from eating poultry meat derived from hens which have been infected with salmonella enteritidis PT4, after the hens have been cooked for three hours at 97 deg C in industrial cooking equipment.

Mr. Freeman: Salmonella enteritidis PT4 can be destroyed by appropriate heat treatment.

North West RHA

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much National Health Service waiting lists have changed between 1979 and 1989 in *(a)* the North West regional health authority and *(b)* the Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table.

In-patient waiting list, North Western and Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley health authorities, 31 March 1979 and 31 March 1989

	1979	1989[1]	Per cent. change
North Western	77,368	67,228	−13·1
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	5,512	3,761	−31·8

[1] Less self deferred cases.
Source: 1979 SBH203 return—1989 KH07, KH07a returns.

We are pleased to see that both region and district have considerably fewer patients waiting than in 1979. The North Western region allocated nearly £300,000 to Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley health authority from the waiting list fund over the last three years. The district has also been allocated a new fully funded consultant urologist post from the 100 new consultant posts announced in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Day Care

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional resources are being made available to local authorities to enable them to implement the day care provisions of the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Provision for implementation of the Children Act 1989 in October 1991 will be included in the Government's expenditure plans for 1991-92, to be announced later this year.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to increase the security of babies and children in hospital by introducing electronic tagging.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Local health authorities determine their own security arrangements.

Family Practitioner Services

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to change the family practitioner services complaints' procedures.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government announced their intention to simplify and streamline the complaints procedures in its White Paper, "Promoting Better Health", which was published in 1987.

We consulted widely with the professions, FPCs and consumer groups about the proposed changes.

Regulations are to be laid today which will bring into effect the changes on 2 April 1990. These new regulations will make it easier for patients to file a complaint and will improve the arrangements for ensuring the complaints are fairly and properly resolved.

The changes will allow some people to make oral complaints to FPCs rather than written ones and will also extend the time limit for filing a complaint from eight to 13 weeks.

In future FPCs will be able to decide the outcome of some cases without reference to the Secretary of State. They will also be required to operate an informal conciliation procedure for dealing with complaints against family practitioners.

These changes are a first step which will help patients, including those from ethnic minorities who may feel intimidated by an unfamiliar language and bureaucracy, to lodge a complaint should they feel that their treatment has been unsatisfactory.

The next step, which was also outlined in "Promoting Better Health", is to write the regulations in simpler and plainer language. We hope to achieve this early next year.

Clinical Research Centre, Northwick Park

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the implications for the local health service will be taken into account in the consideration of the Medical Research Council's proposal to close the clinical research centre at Northwick Park.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Medical Research Council (MRC), with the support of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, has agreed that resources invested currently in the clinical research centre (CRC) at Northwick Park should be reinvested in other centres. The MRC and North West Thames and Harrow health authorities have agreed to join a steering group, chaired by my Department, which will keep under review the implications for the local health service with the following terms of reference.

Terms of reference

Provided that satisfactory progress can be made on the issues to be addressed by the Steering Group listed below, the aim is to move towards the closure of the clinical research centre (CRC) and dispersal of its work by December 1994.

The steering group will accordingly oversee the action being taken by the research and health authorities to achieve a withdrawal from the clinical research centre (CRC) facilities at Northwick Park hospital. They will report periodically to Ministers and the chief executive on progress being made to secure

—an orderly withdrawal;
—minimum disruption of NHS service;
—the effective continued use of the CRC buildings and ancillary facilities; and
—compatibility with national and local service and research strategies.

The steering group would make its first report to Ministers and the chief executive by spring 1990, and aim to make a further report by autumn 1990.

Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now announce details of the appointment and reappointment of chairmen of district health authorities and of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals from 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have today placed in the Library a list of the appointments made with effect from 1 April 1990.

Five district chairmen's appointments are still under consideration and announcements on these will be made shortly.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private nursing homes were registered in 1980 and in 1989, by district health authority area and by region.

Mr. Freeman: In 1982, the first year for which the information was collected centrally, there were 1,214 private nursing homes registered in England. At 31 March 1988, the latest date for which this information is held, the number is 2,821. Summarised booklets giving information

including the number of registered homes in each region and district health authority for each year from 1982 to 1987-88 have been routinely placed in the Library.

Residential Care

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private residential care homes were registered in 1980 and in 1989 by local authority area.

Mr. Freeman: Information for 1980 and 1988 is in the table; information is not yet available for 31 March 1989.

Number of private residential care homes, by local authority, as at 31 March 1980 and 31 March 1988

Local authority	*Number of homes*	
	1980	[1] [2] *1988*
Bedfordshire	8	51
Berkshire	32	82
Buckinghamshire	21	34
Cambridgeshire	15	71
Essex	56	223
Hertfordshire	16	70
Norfolk	64	219
Oxfordshire	13	25
Suffolk	46	101
Camden	2	3
Greenwich	4	3
Hackney	1	1
Hammersmith	0	1
Islington	1	1
Kensington	0	1
Lambeth	2	12
Lewisham	3	18
Southwark	1	0
Tower Hamlets	0	0
Wandsworth	3	4
Westminster	0	0
City of London	0	0
Barking	0	2
Barnet	18	35
Bexley	2	3
Brent	4	8
Bromley	10	24
Croydon	19	66
Ealing	18	21
Enfield	20	31
Haringey	4	7
Harrow	17	26
Havering	3	22
Hillingdon	2	7
Hounslow	0	1
Kingston upon Thames	13	24
Merton	9	16
Newham	1	2
Redbridge	10	16
Richmond upon Thames	4	5
Sutton	11	22
Waltham Forest	4	18
Dorset	130	364
Hampshire	97	397
Isle of Wight	17	88
Kent	171	172
Surrey	52	126
East Sussex	219	416
West Sussex	147	299
Wiltshire	27	115
Avon	57	209
Cornwall	50	217
Devon	260	697
Cleveland	1	30
Cumbria	17	82
Durham	5	44
Northumberland	6	46
Gateshead	0	19
Newcastle upon Tyne	7	21
North Tyneside	19	56
South Tyneside	2	15
Sunderland	4	25
Humberside	30	181
North Yorkshire	54	261
Barnsley	0	16
Doncaster	1	20
Rotherham	0	6
Sheffield	7	30
Bradford	28	92
Calderdale	9	29
Kirklees	11	41
Leeds	14	58
Wakefield	2	27
Cheshire	5	76
Lancashire	96	538
Bolton	1	29
Bury	1	18
Manchester	8	55
Oldham	9	29
Rochdale	3	19
Salford	0	11
Stockport	22	39
Tameside	2	20
Trafford	10	52
Wigan	0	18
Knowsley	0	8
Liverpool	10	24
Sefton	31	122
St. Helens	3	9
Wirral	22	75
Hereford and Worcester	38	187
Shropshire	14	100
Staffordshire	7	120
Warwickshire	22	62
Birmingham	22	120
Coventry	5	57
Dudley	5	53
Sandwell	2	15
Solihull	1	6
Walsall	0	27
Wolverhampton	8	39
Derbyshire	15	131
Leicestershire	17	120
Lincolnshire	23	141
Northamptonshire	18	103
Nottinghamshire	32	134
Gloucestershire	29	82
Somerset	43	107
Isles of Scilly	0	1
England	2,425	8,222

[1] All 1988 figures are provisional.
[2] 1988 figures include nine homes for drug or alcohol abusers.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health after what period of time a person living in a particular local authority area in private residential care becomes the financial responsibility of that authority should they wish to enter residential care directly provided by a different local authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities have a duty to provide services only for people ordinarily resident in their areas. Ordinary residence is decided on the facts of the case, not on any qualifying period and is normally the place where the person has chosen to make his abode.

However, if someone enters a residential care home under arrangements made between a local authority and the home they remain ordinarily resident in the area of the authority making those arrangements whether the home is in that area or not.

Erith and District Hospital

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the development of Erith and district hospital.

Mr. Freeman: Since the previous reply to my hon. Friend on 25 July 1989 at column *672*, one letter has been received from him and one from Bexley community health council.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to issue guidelines to parents on the use of cot mattresses as part of his Department's strategy to reduce the number of cot deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Today the Department's chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, announced that he had asked a group of independent experts to investigate a claim that the emission of toxic gases from fungal growth on some soiled cot mattresses is a cause of sudden infant death. Pending the outcome of the investigation, he gave the following advice to parents: keep babies warm but avoid overheating; ensure good ventilation; follow good hygiene by keeping all clothing and bedding fresh and clean; be alert to signs that the infant may be unwell.

Eastbourne Health Authority

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been allocated to the Eastbourne health authority for each of the two years ending on 31 March 1991; and what is the percentage increase, in real terms, of the second figure over the first.

Mr. Freeman: Revenue allocations to Eastbourne health authority for the years requested are:

1989-90—£55,737,000
1990-91—£58,324,000

The allocation for 1990-91 includes a 4·3 per cent. increase in real terms over 1989-90.

General Practitioner Budgets

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance has been given to general practitioners on planning their own practice ancillary staff and premises for the financial year 1990-91; and what is his assessment of the minimum period of notice of the terms of the cash-limited budget issued by family practitioner committees to enable general practitioners to plan effectively;

(2) whether family practitioner committee cash-limited budgets for ancillary staff and premises are to come into operation on 1 April; and when they will be circulated.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Family practitioner committees will shortly receive cash allocations for 1990-91 for general practitioners' practice staff and premises improvements. General practitioners were given detailed information about the new arrangements in "The 1990 Contract" in August and also in the revised statement of fees and allowances in December. In addition, family practitioner committees were issued management guidance on the cash allocations in November. General practitioners will be aware of our undertaking to fund the cost of reimbursements for all posts and schemes accepted by family practitioner committees by 31 March 1990. We are satisfied that general practitioners have the information they need to plan effectively their improved services from 1 April.

General Practitioners (Computers)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether general practitioners whose computer arrangements are with AAH Meditel will be eligible for the 50 per cent. reimbursement of costs for maintenance, lease or upgrading costs due to commence on 1 April.

Mr. Freeman: It is proposed that direct reimbursement will not be made for leasing and maintenance payments where the practitioner receives a payment from the system supplier, whether or not that payment relates to the leasing agreement or is in respect of any other service or information supplied. For other expenses, direct reimbursement will be made to general practitioners who meet the full costs themselves, based on their individual circumstances.

"Working for Patients"

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library working paper 11 of "Working for Patients" with the complete number of annexes.

Mr. Freeman: Working paper 11 "Framework for Information Systems: Overview" was placed in the Library on 12 January this year.

Erythropoetin

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) for how long the Committee on Safety of Medicines has been considering the licensing of erythropoetin; what is the average length of time the committee takes to license a new drug; and how many drugs are before the committee awaiting a licence;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *772*, what additional information and data are being sought about erythropoetin from the manufacturers by the Committee on Safety of Medicines relating to its safety, quality and efficacy; and on what specific matters reassurance is being sought.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The licensing authority is responsible for issuing licences and routinely seeks the advice of the Committee on Safety of Medicines in respect of all drugs containing new active substances. The average gross processing time taken to license drugs of this kind (including the time taken by the company to answer inquiries) in the 12-month period ending 30 September 1989 was 19 months. There are currently 20 applications under consideration. For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not our practice to disclose details of individual applications. I can say, however, that matters relating to erythropoetin licensing have been considered recently by the European Community's committee for proprietary medicinal products whose response is awaited.

Government Health Documents

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all working papers, implementation documents, consultative documents, departmental circulars, and other publications, whether in draft or final form, that have been issued to date in respect of *(a)* National Health Service matters and *(b)* care in community matters arising from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, the Government's White Papers on these topics, and associated Government initiatives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The main documents issued include:

The White Paper "Working for Patients' and its associated working and discussion papers:

"Working for Patients"—a management summary
Self Governing Hospitals (Working Paper 1)
Funding and Contracts for Hospital Services (Working Paper 2)
Practice Budgets for General Medical Practitioners (Working Paper 3)
Indicative Prescribing Budgets for General Medical Practitioners (Working Paper 4)
Capital Charges (Working Paper 5)
Medical Audit (Working Paper 6)
NHS Consultants: Appointments, Contracts and Distinction Awards (Working Paper 7)
Implications for FPCs (Working Paper 8)
Capital Charges: Funding Issues (Working Paper 9)
Education and Training (Working Paper 10)
Framework for Information Systems: Overview (Working Paper 11)
Contracts for Health Services: Operational Principles
Self Governing Hospitals: An Initial Guide
The Government Response to the Social Services Select Committee Report on "Working for Patients"
Funding General Practice
Contracts for Health Services: Operating Contracts

Executive letters with important related issues:

Self-Governing Hospitals: Identification of Potential Candidates (EL(89)MB/58)
"Working for Patients"—Delegating Responsibilities to Regions and Districts (EL(89)MB/59)
NHS Review: 100 Consultant posts (EL(89)P/61)
Quality (EL(89)MB/117)
Additional Funds for White Paper Implementation: Personnel and Training (EL(89)MB/118)
Capital Charges: Update (EL(89)P/119)
Pricing of Contracts (EL(89)MB/130)
Self Governing Hospitals: Outline Application Document (EL(89)MB/148)
Capital Charges: Asset Groups (EL(89)MB/160)
Indicative Prescribing Budgets and GP Practice Budgets (EL(89)P/169)
Contracts for Health Services: Pricing and Openness (EL(89)MB/171)
Capital Charges: Costing of Health Buildings (EL(89)MB/176)
Capital Charges: Beacon Buildings (EL(89)MB/193)
Service Increment for Teaching (EL(89)MB/199)
The Role of District HAs: Analysis of Issues (EL(89)MB/219)
NHS Review Costs (EL(89)MB/223)
Allocation of Resources for Medical Audit (EL(89)MB/224)
"Working for Patients"—Information and IT (EL(90)MB/7)
NHS Trusts: Originating Hospital Debt (EL(90)MB/20)
Revenue Allocations to DHAs (EL(90)MB/22)

The Government have also issued two draft health circulars on the implementation of the medical audit proposals. The text of two speeches made by the Secretary of State for Health, one on medical education and research issues and the other on the role of the district, have also been published.

The Government have issued a White Paper "Caring for People" and executive letters entitled "Care in the Community" from the chief executive and the chief inspector of social services.

The Government have also published the text of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill together with notes on clauses.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade six level and above working outside headquarters has received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 March 1990]:* The Department's management courses do not at present include specific sessions on equal opportunities for women. However, following a recent review of training, the Department plans to include such sessions on all management courses as soon as possible. There are no staff at grade 6 level and above working outside what would normally be regarded as the Department's headquarters.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what have been the trends in employment since 1983.

Mr. Nicholls: Since 1983 the United Kingdom work force in employment has been on a rising trend. In September 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the work force in employment was 26,955,000. This represents an increase of 3,391,000 or 14 per cent. since March 1983 when the figure was 23,564,000.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the unemployment rate for Scotland, *(b)* the male unemployment rate for Scotland, *(c)* the female unemployment rate for Scotland, *(d)* the unemployment rate for England, *(e)* the south-east of England and *(f)* the full-time employment rate for Scotland as at (i) October 1964, (ii) March 1966, (iii) June 1970, (iv) February 1974, (v) October 1974, (vi) May 1979, (vii) June 1983 and (viii) June 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The extent of the available information is contained in the following table, all of which is available from the Library. Unemployment on a seasonally adjusted consistent basis at regional level is unavailable prior to April 1974. Employment estimates at regional level are not split between full and part-time.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates[1]

	Scotland			England south east	
	male	*female*	*total*	*total*	*total*
October 1974	4·1	1·5	3·1	1·9	1·3
May 1979	6·5	4·4	5·7	3·7	2·6
June 1983	14·5	9·2	12·3	10·1	7·5
June 1987	16·0	9·3	13·2	9·6	7·3

[1] Work force based rates.

Small Businesses

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been created since 1985 by firms employing between five and 19 people.

Mr. Eggar: The latest research commissioned by my Department estimates that between 1985 and 1987, firms employing between five and 19 people created 290,000 additional jobs, compared with just 20,000 in larger firms.

YTS

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment at the end of October, November, December 1989 and January 1990, how many people of YTS eligible age registered with jobcentres or the careers service were awaiting an offer of a YTS place; and of them how many were receiving bridging allowance or extended child benefit or income support.

Mr. Nicholls: Only local careers services hold information on the total number of young people awaiting the offer of a YTS place. There is no central record.

The number of young people receiving bridging allowance was as follows:

	Numbers
12 October	8,096
9 November	7,446
14 December	7,440
11 January	8,943

The number of young people whose parents were receiving extended child benefit is provided in the table:

	Numbers
29 October	14,639
26 November	13,461
31 December	12,652
28 January	1,104

Information on the number of young people receiving income support is not available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for participants in the YTS scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: At 31 January 1990 there were 380,200 young people undertaking YTS training in Great Britain.

Bridging Allowances

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds, by region, were in receipt of bridging allowance at the mid-point of November, December 1989 and January in the current year.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers of 16 to 17-year-olds in receipt of bridging allowance were as follows:

Region	*9 November 1989*	*14 December 1989*	*11 January 1990*
East Midlands and Eastern	750	822	1,000
West Midlands	788	788	927
Wales	476	460	563
London and South East			
Eastern Division	384	413	421
Southern Division	394	425	519
Western Division	365	430	483
South West	439	499	588
Northern	530	419	602
Yorkshire and Humberside	833	841	1,048
Scotland	1,157	1,086	1,205
North West	1,330	1,257	1,162

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each Department of Employment Training Agency area what were the profiles of the number of expected starts with training managers, excluding conversion from other programmes, on employment training for each month since September 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Profiles are for internal management information purposes only.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each training agency area how many child minder allowances have been granted to lone parent employment training participants since September 1988; and how many were granted during the last three most recently available months.

Mr. Nicholls: The information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in the most recent 12-month period how many claimants called for restart interview have failed to attend their interview; how many of those failing to attend are believed to have found work; how many of those failing to attend have not found work; how many failing to attend have had their benefit stopped and how many of these have successfully appealed against the benefit decision; and how many failing to attend have subsequently re-registered as unemployed.

Mr. Eggar: Between February 1989 and January 1990, 2,781,400 were called for restart interview, of which 299,000 were referred to unemployment benefit offices for failing to attend that interview. A total of 26,800 (9 per cent.) of these had their benefit or credits disallowed.

The other information requested is not available.

Young People (Earnings)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the most recent figures derived from the 1989 new earnings survey showing the average weekly gross earnings not affected by absence, full-time, both male and female, for 16-year-olds and for 17-year-olds.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is provided in the following table:

Average gross weekly earnings April 1989

[1] Age	Males £	Females £
16	85·0	87·1
17	98·9	98·9

[1] As at 1 January 1989.

Note: Full-time employees, earnings not affected by absence

Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of unemployed persons removed from the unemployment register as a result of changes that took effect in August 1989 in the redundant mineworkers payments scheme, by English, Welsh and Scottish county, by local authority district and by parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Nicholls: Estimates of the numbers of mineworkers who have decided to take advantage of the change in the redundant mineworkers payments scheme (effective from July 1989) and are no longer signing on at unemployment benefit offices, are not available below regional level. The latest regional estimates of the cumulative effect to January 1990 are given in the table:

Estimated Number of Mineworkers by region

West midlands—about 700
East midlands—a little over 5,000
Yorkshire and Humberside—a little over 4,000
North West—about 400
North—about 2,000
Scotland—about 1,500
Wales—a little less than 1,000
Total—a little over 15,000

Note: There has been little or no effect in the Greater London, South East, East Anglia and South West regions.

Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in unemployment each year since the inception of the London Docklands development corporation in *(a)* the Greater London area, *(b)* the London Docklands development corporation area and *(c)* the three docklands boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark.

Mr. Nicholls: The following information is available from the Library. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available on the same geographical basis. Comparisons are affected by various changes to the count over the period.

Unemployment (not seasonally adjusted)
Annual percentage change (January to January)

Percentage

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
London docklands development corporation	3·3	7·3	−3·4	−14·8	−19·5	−15·9
Greater London	6·6	3·5	−3·7	−18·4	−25·1	−18·2
Newham LB	5·1	4·5	−2·8	−17·4	−23·1	−6·7
Southwark LB	8·4	6·2	−2·3	−14·4	−19·2	−20·9
Tower Hamlets LB	2·0	2·6	−1·6	−12·7	−21·6	−14·8

Women Employees

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in view of the demographic trends, what further plans he has to attract more women into the work force.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *234-35*, where the many steps being taken by the Government to facilitate the re-entry of women to the labour market were set out in detail. The Government will continue to encourage employers to adapt traditional working practices in order to accommodate the needs of those with family responsibilities and, where appropriate, will assist in ensuring that information and practical assistance is available for women returners.

Earnings

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of (i) manual, (ii) non-manual and (iii) all full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £160, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £170, *(d)* £120 and *(e)* £110 per week for (1) men, (2) women and (3) all full-time employees excluding overtime pay, in Great Britain and each standard economic region.

Mr. Nicholls: Due to the considerable amount of information requested, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the proportion of female part-time workers earning below hourly earning's thresholds excluding overtime pay of (i) £2·20, £2·25 and £2·30 in 1982, (ii) £3·40, £3·50 and £3·60 in 1983 and (iii) £3·70, £3·80 and £3·90 in 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimated proportions of part-time female adult employees earning below specified amounts in the new earnings survey sample in April of each year were:

Hourly earnings less than	Percentage
1982[1]	
£2·20	72
£2·30	76

Hourly earnings less than	Percentage
1983[1]	
£3·40	91
£3·60	93
1989[2]	
£3·60	69
£3·80	73
£4·00	77

[1] Females 18 and over.
[2] Femals on adult rates of pay.

Figures of the percentages earning below £2·25 in 1982, £3·50 in 1983 and £3·70 and £3·90 in 1989 are not available; the nearest available figures are given.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total of unemployment benefit underpaid for each of the last 10 years; and what he is doing to prevent a recurrence.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 March 1990]:* The Department does not record details of underpayments of unemployment benefit. However, the National Audit Office has estimated the level of underpayment of unemployment benefit for the 1987-88 and 1988-89 financial years from sample surveys.

Levels of £61 million (4·2 per cent. of outturn) and £55 million (5 per cent. outturn) were estimated for 1987-88 and 1988-89 respectively. In the majority of cases where unemployment benefit was wrongly withheld the claimants were properly paid income support instead and suffered little or no overall loss of benefit. Taking this into account the actual amount withheld for 1987-88 was 1·6 per cent of outturn and for 1988-89 0·9 per cent. of outturn.

A number of initiatives have already been introduced to address the problems of incorrect payments. These include a more detailed examination of all new claims, a review of a proportion of claims within a few weeks of the initial claim, and for restart and counselling interviews to be carried out at six-month intervals. The full programme of improvement measures depends on changes to the main benefit computer system and will be fully implemented by late 1990.

SCOTLAND

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to make any changes to the operation of the extended fixed penalty system for road traffic offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the light of consultation with representative organisations my right hon. and learned Friend has decided to make the following changes from 1 April 1990.

He proposes to increase fixed penalty levels to £16 for non-endorsable offences and £32 for endorsable offences, and to amend the range of offences to include the offences of failing to comply with a red signal at a pelican crossing and failing to accord precedence to pedestrians at a pelican crossing or zebra crossing.

Orders to effect these changes have been made, and laid before both Houses of Parliament.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Marland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the figures for bovine spongiform encephalopathy cases for each of the eight weeks ended on 23 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information for Great Britain is as follows:

Suspect cases notified

Week ending	Numbers
5 January	246
12 January	292
19 January	285
26 January	292
2 February	302
9 February	324
16 February	359
23 February	362

The figures which have recently been quoted in the press and which appeared to suggest a marked increase after the announcement of 13 February, *Official Report*, column 196, of increased compensation for confirmed cases referred not to the number of cases notified but simply to the number processed by my Department.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle involved currently or historically in clinical trials of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Maclean: The Southwood report describes epidemiological studies that were undertaken to establish the origin of BSE infection. These investigated the possibility of links between the disease and any type of treatment administered to the cattle concerned, and found that there was none. In my reply of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *900*, to the hon. Member I said that I was not aware of any case of BSE in an animal treated with BST, but I now understand that there is evidence of one such case. This does not alter the conclusion that no link exists.

Hydrocarbons

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the presence in food or drink of other similar hydrocarbons one might expect to find where benzene has been found naturally.

Mr. Maclean: According to the scientific literature hydrocarbons related to benzene have been detected in some foods and drinks but we do not have detailed information. The steering group on food surveillance has begun some work in this area but results are not yet available.

Sewage Sludge Boats

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what permits he has issued to allow sewage sludge boats to discharge their cargo in or off the Bristol channel; what is the annual rate of discharge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Two water companies, Welsh and Wessex, are licensed to dump 55,000 tonnes and 300,000 tonnes respectively of treated sludge at a dump site situated about half-way across the Bristol channel between Ilfracombe and the Gower peninsula. About 95 per cent. of the sewage sludge is water. Each company is authorised to dump up to 10 per cent. of its licensed quantity at an alternative bad weather site which is situated 6 miles east of the main site.

Food Irradiation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will initiate a study of the health effects on the work force of companies producing radioactive sources for the technologies to irradiate foods, in the light of the findings of the Gardner report on radiation effects.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

In its second and third reports the committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment (COMARE) recommended that studies of the health of the offspring of radiation workers should be set up. The Government accepted these recommendations in full and are urgently considering a number of relevant research proposals.

Liquid Egg

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has any evidence of inadequately heat-treated bulk liquid egg being released for commercial sale; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what research his Department has commissioned into whether it is possible, by microbiological testing, to determine whether any batch of bulk liquid eggs is so heavily contaminated in its untreated state that it will cause a liquid egg pasteurisation process to fail.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The pasteurisation of bulk raw liquid egg is a very sensitive process. Only a moderate heat treatment for a limited time during the process can be applied otherwise the functional properties of the liquid egg are destroyed. Therefore, it follows that there will be levels of contamination at which some bacteria will survive. It is desirable that the raw product being accepted for pasteurisation should not be subject to heavy contamination. An investigation into the efficacy of pasteurisation of whole liquid egg is being conducted by the PHLS. However, it is recognised that the introduction of the Liquid Egg (Pasteurisation) Regulations 1963 had a profound effect in reducing the number of human cases of salmonellosis.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks and procedures are adopted to identify failures in the pasteurisation of bulk liquid egg *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

Local authorities have responsibility for enforcing the Liquid Egg (Pasteurisation) Regulations 1963 and they take samples for an alpha amylase test which indicates if the pasteurisation process has been effective. Tests for the presence of salmonella are also carried out. The food industry carries out its own controls through its quality assurance systems.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anti-Hungarian Demonstrations

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the recent anti-Hungarian demonstrations in Slovakia and in Transylvanian cities in Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: We understand that there was a demonstration in Nove Zamky in Slovakia in mid-February, and that some anti-Hungarian sentiments were expressed at another in Bratislava on 5 March. In Romania in early February there were demonstrations and counter-demonstrations in Tirgu Mures and other Transylvanian towns about the issue of separate education for ethnic Hungarians, but we understand that there have been no further large demonstrations since then.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Governments of Czechoslovakia and Romania regarding the recent anti-Hungarian demonstrations in both countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made no representations to the Governments of Czechoslovakia and Romania about demonstrations in those countries.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Sri Lanka for the full restoration of human rights in the light of the reduction of terrorism in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 7 March to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), *Official Report*, column 699.

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This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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